

The Falcons Preparatory School for Boys

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number 318/6551
Unique reference number 135719
Inspection number 341992
Inspection dates 30 September –1 October 2009
Reporting inspector Jill Bainton

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended.

Age group: 7–13

Published:

Reference no: 090070

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.¹

Information about the school

The Falcons Preparatory School for Boys was registered and then opened in September 2008 for boys aged seven to 13 years. The school is located close to Richmond town centre. The original Victorian building, formerly a tram station, then a fire station and latterly, an art college, has been extensively remodelled. The school is owned by the Alpha Plus group who run many schools across the country, including other schools in West London. There are currently 66 boys on roll aged from seven to 10 years. There is an admission process leading to entry to the school.

The school aims to 'provide a challenging yet supportive academic environment...to enable boys to grow intellectually, emotionally, physically and socially.' This is the school's first inspection by Ofsted.

Evaluation of the school

The Falcons Preparatory School for Boys has made a purposeful, energetic start with much of the credit due to the leadership at the school. It provides a good quality of education through a varied and interesting curriculum and good teaching which has many outstanding features. Relationships are very positive at all levels and the boys say that they are very happy at school. The boys' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and their welfare, health and safety are promoted effectively. The school's procedures to safeguard the boys are very good and all regulations are met. The school meets all the regulations for registration.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good with many interesting features and contributes strongly to fulfilling the school's aims. It has been well planned and documented and teachers make effective use of all available resources, including the internet. The school teaches all the subjects of the National Curriculum with the addition of religious education (RE) and French and Latin as the boys move through the school. The curriculum planning shows continuous development from Year 3 to the current Year 5, with a range of coverage appropriate to the boys' ages and needs. Curricular

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

provision is in place for older pupils as the school age range grows. The wide range of physical activities, including swimming, provides the boys with the opportunity to develop their skills and utilise their energy in purposeful, healthy activity. There is very good provision for basic skills with a clear emphasis on improving the boys' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. One interesting feature is the opportunity each boy has to make a short presentation to his class, with staff support, using the interactive whiteboard. This helps to increase the boys' self-confidence to speak in front of others. The creative arts are given a high priority with art, music and drama lessons. Boys have the opportunity to learn an instrument through individual tuition. A school choir has been formed and they are currently preparing for the Alpha Plus schools festival when all the schools in the group join together for a concert. This varied curriculum provides the opportunity for all the boys, including those who need additional support, to progress and develop well. The provision for boys who need additional help is very well planned and delivered, for individuals, very small groups and in whole classes. Education for personal, social and health education is good. The programme of extra-curricular activities, including both day and residential visits and visiting speakers to the school, is developing well. The range of activities on offer after school is varied and currently includes cookery, drama and chess, which are all well attended. The boys have the useful opportunity to complete their homework before the clubs begin.

The teaching and assessment are good with many outstanding features. The staff plan their lessons well and share the learning aims with the boys. They use a range of methods to engage the boys' interest, including good use of the interactive whiteboard. Discussion, as part of the lessons, is considered to be an important element; many of the boys are very articulate and enjoy the opportunity to share their learning with their teachers and classmates. For example, during a Year 4 mathematics lesson, the boys were asked to explain and demonstrate the process of division they were using, which helped them to clarify their ideas and share it with others. The boys say that they like their teachers who are always willing to help them. Staff are excellent role models. They share their enthusiasm for their subject with the boys and the atmosphere of mutual respect in class is very conducive to learning. The staff manage their time well and keep the boys on task, humour is used effectively with phrases such as 'go..go..go' used to encourage the boys to focus on their work. The animated and well-informed teaching engages the boys' interest and extends their knowledge and understanding. As a result, the boys make good or better progress. Teachers' expectations are high and in most cases the boys respond by trying hard, concentrating and using their time well. Another important element in the older boys' lessons is the time allowed for them to think and formulate their answers to the teacher's questions and not just to say the first thing that comes to mind. Some lessons are a little long for the younger boys but staff try hard to vary the learning activities to keep the boys on task. The school is considering shortening these lessons. The vast majority of the boys concentrate and use their energies well and are developing as learners in a purposeful and productive way. Support staff fulfil their roles very well. Resources are plentiful and effectively

used. Homework is well planned and monitored and helps to consolidate the learning in lessons.

The school has a good assessment, recording and reporting system. The boys are given their own targets which they clearly understand and try to meet as well as they can. The staff are very diligent in marking the boys' work and in the small classes can give them very clear and helpful feedback as to how to improve. The school has identified some improvements it wishes to make to the current systems of assessment which will include more individual and peer-group assessment.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for the boys' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There is a very friendly, welcoming atmosphere in the school. The boys are very positive and keen to learn. They are enthusiastic about school, making comments such as 'the best school ever... I love it here...the teachers are here to help us.' Through the teaching of religious education, boys learn about world religions. Spiritual awareness is also enhanced through the creative arts lessons and the visits the boys make to the theatre, museums and galleries, both locally and in central London. The boys' behaviour is outstanding; they understand and follow the positive school rules which encourage them to treat others as they would like to be treated. Each term a head boy is chosen and he and the prefects and house captains take their role very seriously. The school council representatives feel that their voices are heard with one Year 3 boy saying that he had to make 'important decisions' for the others. The boys play well together, say they feel safe at school and enjoy the fresh, healthy wholesome lunch where good manners are encouraged. Their attendance is excellent. Their economic well-being is effectively fostered through the curriculum. They regularly raise money for local and national charities. Visits outside school to places of interest, such as the Houses of Parliament, give the boys a good understanding of British services and institutions. The school does assist the boys to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures to promote tolerance and harmony but has acknowledged that this work could be extended.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of the boys is good. The school is a safe place in which to work and learn. The school has devised and effectively implemented a range of policies which includes anti-bullying, health and safety on visits outside school and safeguarding. The member of staff responsible for safeguarding has been trained in accordance with the latest guidance and all staff have also received training. There are trained first aiders and a suitable policy which is effectively implemented. Accidents are recorded and well-equipped first aid boxes are available. The attendance and admission registers are kept according to regulations. The school is vigilant about fire safety and all appliances are maintained annually. Regular fire drills are held and recorded. Careful risk assessments are carried out for all activities. The planned programme for physical activities helps to

ensure that all the boys are encouraged to stay healthy. The school fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school checks the suitability of all staff and volunteers to work with children and holds all the information on a single central register as required.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are suitable to ensure effective learning. The premises are attractive, well maintained and welcoming. The school building is an imaginative design which blends in well with the features of the existing structures and provides a suitable outdoor space for pupils at break time. The accommodation has been designed and completed to allow the school to grow to its maximum number without further changes.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Parents, carers and others are provided with a very good range of clear and up-to-date information through the prospectus, website and newsletters. A large number of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and expressed very positive views on the school. They made comments such as, it is 'very nurturing, caring and has very high standards...we are extremely happy with the school.' They are kept well informed through detailed written reports and consultation evenings. The school ensures that advice is available to parents about their next choice of school for their son.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school complaints procedures fully meet the regulations.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('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:

- include more individual and peer-group evaluation in the assessment procedures

- increase the range of opportunities to promote cultural awareness among the boys.

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 boarding provision (*leave blank if not applicable*)

Evaluation of boarding provision				
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School details

Name of school	The Falcons Preparatory School for Boys	
DCSF number	318/6551	
Unique reference number	135719	
Type of school	Preparatory	
Status	Independent	
Date school opened	September 2008	
Age range of pupils	7–13	
Gender of pupils	Boys	
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 66	Total: 66
Annual fees	£ 11,850	
Address of school	41 Kew Foot Road Richmond London TW9 2SS	
Telephone number	0844 2252211	
Fax number	0844 2252212	
Email address	admin@falconsprep.co.uk	
Headteacher	Antony Shawyer	
Proprietor	Alpha Plus Group Ltd	
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton	
Dates of inspection	30 September – 1 October 2009	