

The Maharishi School of the Age of Enlightenment

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	888/6018
Unique Reference Number	119843
Inspection number	331363
Inspection dates	4 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Amraz Ali 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, 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 Maharishi School educates 67 girls and boys between the ages of 4 and 16 years. It was established in 1986 to serve the children of practitioners of Transcendental Meditation who had moved to the Skelmersdale area of Lancashire in the 1980s. Many families live reasonably close to the school. Currently no pupil has a statement of special educational need or requires support for English as an additional language. At the time of the inspection there were no children accessing the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, which is available for children who join the school in their Reception Year and who are taught alongside Year 1 and Year 2 pupils.

The school provides Early Years Foundation Stage, primary and secondary education following the principles of Consciousness-Based Education established by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi focused on 'developing wholeness in the life of the learner'. The school aims to '...present to the world an ideal system of education, where not only will the intellect be fed and satisfied, but the basis of intellect, the field of pure intelligence, the source of the basis of life, will be fully realised for everyone. The result will be a life that is not baseless, but that has a profound basis in the lively field of all possibilities. The school was previously inspected in June 2006.

Evaluation of the school

The Maharishi School very successfully meets its aims. It provides an outstanding quality of education for all of its pupils that is well tailored to their individual needs. As a result of the outstanding curriculum and the good and often outstanding teaching pupils make outstanding progress from their individual starting points. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, as is their behaviour. The school meets all but one of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The quality of education is outstanding overall because individuals and their needs are at the heart of the school's work, from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards. There have been continuous improvements since the time of the previous inspection. The outstanding curriculum meets the needs of all pupils effectively by focusing closely on their individual needs and the development of the whole person. A significant element of this is the school's work on developing Transcendental Meditation and its teaching of the Science of Creative Intelligence along with the Maharishi Vedic Approach to Health. This work is particularly effective at allowing pupils to learn self-calming and thinking skills. There is a clear focus on developing the basic skills of English, mathematics and science with particular strengths in the provision for creative writing and art throughout the school. The broad and balanced curriculum reflects most subjects of the National Curriculum and is well structured around a range of commercial schemes of work. There are appropriate subject policies in place and teachers endeavour to select activities to interest and motivate pupils. For example, in a Year 8 geography lesson pupils were interested in the heroin trail and were beginning to think about the adverse impact of illegal drugs on their users in this country.

Good use is made of a second site that the school shares with the wider community for the teaching of physical education and art. Pupils are enthusiastic about art and are justifiably proud of the high quality of their art work. Visits are a particular strength of the school and good use is made of the school's mini bus to facilitate trips to local places of interest such as museums and outdoor education centres, as well as further afield to the Isle of Man. Pupils say that they enjoy these visits which successfully reinforce their classroom learning. Information and communication technology is used well in the suite of computers. These are used for some whole-class teaching sessions and are utilised with considerable success by older students when carrying out independent research in relation to their course work for GCSEs. Improvements since the previous inspection are reflected in the quality of the presentation of work which is now largely good and in the way that English skills are practised across the curriculum.

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding overall and is an improvement from the time of the previous inspection. Teaching and learning are consistently good and sometimes outstanding and as a consequence all pupils make outstanding progress from their starting points. By the time they leave the school they reach consistently high standards. Teachers and support staff know pupils exceptionally well and establish good relationships and clear routines to support their learning. Teachers use their good subject knowledge and expertise to excellent effect to support pupils' learning. Teaching builds on pupils' previous learning and enables them to apply and extend their understanding and skills successfully. Within the secondary classes much of the teaching is formal and is often based on course text books for the various subjects. This provides a secure structure which pupils understand. Pupils respond well to their teachers and particularly enjoy opportunities for discussion. Teachers use questioning effectively to check on pupils' understanding and because they know their pupils very well they are able to give timely individual

support. The impact of the small class sizes is such that each pupil benefits from the individual attention that is provided; pupils themselves value this and report that it helps them to make very good progress with their work. The school assesses individual pupils' progress regularly and effectively, providing parents with termly reports and detailed end-of-year reports. These are well understood by pupils but do not always indicate to pupils or their parents the National Curriculum level or the GCSE grade to which the pupil is working.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school's focus on individuals and its use of meditation and the quest for balance underpins all that it does. As a consequence pupils are calm, confident, self-assured, polite and considerate. They are eager to acquire knowledge and skills and enjoy learning. All members of staff treat pupils with respect and sensitivity and value their views. Excellent relationships throughout the school have helped to create a very effective learning environment, where all feel safe and are eager to learn. Pupils say that the daily practice of Transcendental Meditation and teaching the Science of Creative Intelligence helps them to be calm, have clear enquiring minds and be good at learning. Through this work pupils develop a strong sense of right and wrong. Their behaviour is outstanding and many are keen to take on responsibilities, as when older pupils were seen helping the younger pupils.

The Science of Creative Intelligence and the Words of Wisdom programme for younger pupils encompass all aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is enhanced through assemblies that tackle moral themes and acknowledge various world religions and cultures, through educational visits, and through a strong emphasis on creative development. The firm focus on the self and each individual's development means that pupils are very well prepared to become responsible adults and citizens. Pupils gain a secure knowledge of English public institutions and services through history and geography. For example, pupils in Key Stage 2 learn about parliament and this is extended in Key Stage 3 history when they learn about democracy and the suffragette movement. They have many opportunities to contribute to community life. They raise funds for the school and support local, national and international charities. For example pupils have been involved with the 'send my friend to school' project to encourage the development of education in other countries. Their own attendance is exemplary and an indication of how highly they value the education they receive.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Effective procedures are in place to safeguard pupils' welfare, health and safety, which are good overall. Strengths include the very good quality of accommodation and space for learning. Pupils indicate that they feel safe and well cared for. They say that there is no bullying and that any disagreements which might occur are sorted out quickly by staff. Pupils are given very good advice about how to stay healthy and are knowledgeable about healthy eating and the need for healthy snacks at break times. They know about the need for regular physical exercise. The very

good staffing ratio ensures that the supervision of pupils is very good. An appropriate number of staff hold first aid qualifications and received regular first aid training. Risk assessments are carried out for indoor and outdoor activities, including for the play spaces around the school. Although the site affords vehicular access to a nearby property, the risks have been identified and during the inspection these were seen to be managed appropriately. Staff have been checked carefully before they take up employment in relation to their suitability to work with children, and the single central register of such checks is kept as required. There is an appropriate policy in place for child protection and there is a designated member of staff identified for the purposes of child protection. However, the required training for this role has not been updated during the previous two years. The school is now committed to ensuring that the relevant action will be taken to redress this sole area of non-compliance.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Although there were no children of Reception age at the time of the inspection pupils' records, their work books, discussions with children and teachers' planning indicates that the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and that children make good progress. In their personal and social development and in their communication skills their progress is outstanding. By the time children start in Year 1, they are highly motivated learners who handle equipment with care and cooperate very well in groups. By the age of five, most children attain above national expectations in each area of learning because of the careful nurturing they receive. This is because this area of the school is well led and managed and there is appropriate emphasis on each area of learning. Furthermore, the school has forged excellent relationships with parents and is very successful in enabling children to settle quickly into routines. Although the formal recording of children's achievements is at an early stage of development, the quality of teaching and learning has many good features. For example, the good ratio of adults to children and the warmth of the atmosphere ensure that the youngest children feel secure, and that all benefit from much timely individual attention. The school places great emphasis on the development of the children's communication skills and promotes a love of books to encourage reading and writing. However, although the curriculum is good, the quality of learning is limited by the lack of a suitable, secure and discrete outdoor area that is readily accessible by the children. This not only impedes children's physical development but also the development of other aspects of their learning.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of the one listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with DCSF guidance Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following point for development:

- improve the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum by extending the use of the outdoor area to develop all areas of learning further.

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	Maharishi School of the Age of Enlightenment
DCSF number	888/6018
Unique reference number	119843
Type of school	Primary and secondary
Status	Independent
Date school opened	1986
Age range of pupils	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 31 Girls: 37 Total: 68
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0 Girls: 0 Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0 Girls: 0 Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4662 (primary) to £6816 (secondary)
Address of school	Cobbs Brow Lane Lathom Ormskirk Lancashire L40 6JJ
Telephone number	01695 729912
Fax number	01695 729030
Email address	enquiries@maharishischool.com
Headteacher	Dr D Cassells
Proprietor	New Beacon School Ltd
Reporting inspector	Amraz Ali HMI
Dates of inspection	4 March 2009