

Heritage House School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110582
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	356776
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Kay (Kathleen) Charlton

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	73
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barry Bennett
Headteacher	Suzanne Pennington
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2007
School address	Cameron Road Chesham HP5 3BP
Telephone number	01494 771445
Fax number	01494 775892
Email address	office@heritagehouse.bucks.sch.uk

Age group	2–19
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2011
Inspection number	356776

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Eighteen lessons were observed and 13 teachers seen. Meetings were held with pupils, staff and governors. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan, curriculum planning, assessment information, school policies, minutes of the governing body meetings, and annual review procedures, and 46 questionnaires from parents and carers were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effectiveness of teaching in challenging all pupils in the light of the increased complexity of their needs.
- The success of the revised curriculum in benefitting all pupils.
- The effectiveness of the systems for tracking pupils' progress and setting challenging targets to ensure the best outcomes for pupils.
- The extent to which leaders ensure improvement, with a focus on the role of subject coordinators.

Information about the school

Heritage House caters for pupils who have a statement of special educational needs, usually related to severe learning needs. Invariably, pupils have associated difficulties, including autism, visual impairment, sensory, physical and medical needs. The numbers on roll and the range and complexity of pupils' needs have increased since the previous inspection. The vast majority are from White British backgrounds, with a small minority from British Asian backgrounds. Very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is high. Pupils are organised into three departments, one that caters for pupils whose primary need is cognition and learning, a second that caters for pupils whose primary need is autism and a third for a very small minority of pupils aged 11 to 16 whose primary need is physical. The first two groups are managed by Heritage House. The third is managed by the PACE Centre, a private sector provider, based at the Heritage House site. Provision for the pupils at the PACE Centre was not part of this inspection. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two nursery classes. The class catering for children with autism opened in January 2011. The school holds Healthy Schools status, the SWAN award for preparation for life after school, Investors in People, Activemark and Sportsmark awards.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Heritage House is an outstanding school. Pupils grow in confidence and self-belief and their behaviour and attitudes are exemplary. They thoroughly enjoy school and want to do their best and, as result, they achieve exceptionally well. Teaching and learning are excellent. Staff have high expectations and are extremely skilful in challenging pupils of different abilities, including those with the most complex needs. The school uses every opportunity to develop its staff so that their expertise matches the changing needs of the school population. The very high quality of management of teaching and learning provides targeted training for staff, ensuring continual improvement of classroom practice. Planning is carefully tailored to provide exciting experiences for pupils and makes best use of the skills of teaching assistants and therapists so that there is a seamless approach.

The school has made noticeable improvements to the curriculum since the previous inspection and the organisation into departments is working very effectively. The exceptionally strong provision in art, music and physical education, along with the very wide range of enrichment, ensures that pupils are highly motivated. Links with others, including a strong link with a school in Japan and with the specialist facility for physical education based on its own site, support the curriculum extremely well. The curriculum is used very effectively to enable all groups of pupils, whatever their needs, to make excellent progress from their starting points. Personal development is a cornerstone and underpinning everything is the exemplary care, guidance and support for pupils. The quality of education is as strong in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in the sixth form as in other year groups.

The school is led with passion and commitment by the headteacher. Along with the outstanding leadership team, she has ensured highly effective improvement since the previous inspection. All staff see their leadership roles as contributing to the school's success and display, along with the pupils, a strong belief in the school's vision that 'we learn together and achieve together'. The school has rightly identified that subject co-ordinators do not play as active a role as they might in monitoring their subjects across the school to ensure pupils' achievements are always of the very highest standard. It has highlighted this as a priority. Outstanding governance includes key contributions by the governing body towards the school's strategic development and in ensuring that resources are very effectively targeted to meet pupils' changing needs. The school has developed very rigorous and robust systems to track pupils' progress and set them challenging targets. It makes very effective use of this information to intervene if any pupils are not doing quite as well as they might and to guide school improvement planning. The rigour of its self-evaluation means that the school is clear about its strengths and the areas that are in need of improvement and that a pattern of continual improvement is well established. The school makes very effective use of its strong links with others, including parents and

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

carers, to support its development and, with the drive and enthusiasm of its staff, it is extremely well placed to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend the role of subject coordinators in monitoring their subjects across the school so that they play a more active role in ensuring pupils' achievements are always of the very highest standard.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Across the school, pupils, including the very few who are at the early stages of speaking English and those with complex needs, enjoy learning. They invariably reach and often exceed the challenging targets they are set. The high expectations of staff ensure that the achievements of pupils of differing abilities are excellent. A good example was seen in an outstanding geography lesson where all pupils gained in-depth understanding about aspects of life in Japan. They also learned how to follow instructions and make choices. Pupils of all ages demonstrate excellent concentration in lessons and the ways in which they build on their successes is noticeable. They persevere extremely well even when tasks are very demanding so that by age 19, all gain a good range of qualifications and move very successfully to the next stage of their education.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They show great sensitivity to each other's feelings and to those of others, for example to their friends in Japan who have been affected by the recent natural disaster. They are very supportive of each other and respond to times for reflection in a very mature way, for example when the song 'Angel' is played in assembly. Through the school council, pupils learn to spend wisely and make purchases that benefit the school community. Through the extensive links with others, pupils have excellent opportunities to contribute to the wider community, for instance by taking part in environmental projects and acting as advisers for the G20 summit and the 2012 Paralympics.

Pupils are confident to express their views on a range of issues and they are clear that they are listened to and that they feel safe and secure in school. They show excellent understanding of the need for a healthy lifestyle and enthusiastically take part in the wide-ranging opportunities for physical development as recognised by the Healthy Schools, Activemark and Sportsmark awards. First day absence procedures are operated with rigour and pupils' attendance is above average. Through the focused development of pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) as well as their personal skills, they are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their lives.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

How effective is the provision?

Teachers and support staff work together very effectively as a team. They have a totally consistent approach to behaviour management that ensures that all pupils, regardless of need, learn extremely well. Relationships with pupils are excellent and enable everyone to make a crucial contribution to learning. Staff assess each pupil's progress carefully and, as a result, match activities very effectively to meet their individual needs. The range of strategies they employ, including the use of signs and symbols to support pupils' language and communication, ensures that pupils of all abilities are confident to express themselves and play a full part in the learning process. Staff use resources, including many that are 'hands on' and ICT, very effectively to motivate pupils. They are extremely positive and yet discerning in their feedback, reflecting their high expectations for each pupil.

The curriculum provides an extremely wide range of opportunities and ensures an excellent match between pupils' needs and academic, practical and creative activities. It is very carefully tailored to the aspirations of each pupil with individualised timetables as needed and highly effective input from therapists. The provision is enhanced extremely well through a range of outdoor pursuits, activities using a trampoline, Taiko drumming and visits, a number of which are residential. Along with the regular theme days, these not only add to pupils' enjoyment of school but very successfully link their learning to real-

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

life experiences. A very carefully organised work experience programme ensures that pupils develop the skills needed for life once they leave school.

Care of pupils is exemplary, with all staff treating pupils with dignity. Staff make sure that pupils, including those who arrive at different times, settle quickly and happily into school life. Transition arrangements for those moving into the school, and those moving from school contribute extremely well to reducing pupils' anxieties. Pupils receive very good advice to help them make choices about the next stage in their lives. The extremely good links with others, including parents and carers and a wide range of agencies such as health professionals and social services, ensures that support is very well targeted to those with identified needs. The key worker system is particularly effective in ensuring support is finely tuned to individual pupils' needs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The drive and ambition of the headteacher create a 'can do' culture that ensures pupils and staff want to do their best. Senior staff work very well with other staff as part of a team, ensuring that the quality of teaching is continually improving for the benefit of pupils. The governing body's clear grasp of the school's strengths and areas for development, and their breadth of knowledge about the school, ensure they challenge the school with relevant and searching questions that help to drive its strategic development.

Staff at all levels respond enthusiastically to their roles and responsibilities so that key priorities are tackled in an extremely positive way. This approach has underpinned the school's improvement since the last inspection and it is with a sense of enthusiasm that subject coordinators are extending their role in monitoring. All adults who work in the school have very good opportunities to develop as professionals so that they are able to use their skills to best effect for the pupils.

Staff work extremely well with parents and carers to help them support their children's needs. Links are established through many meetings. These include some where staff give advice, for example, about the use of signs and symbols, regular contact by phone and visits home that include time for pupil tuition if needed. The school has very systematic procedures for checking the views of parents and carers and it responds very positively to their suggestions.

Community cohesion is outstanding. The school's contribution in local, national and international contexts is very strong. Pupils learn about others through links with many schools and organisations locally and they work with pupils from two schools nationally

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

whose pupils are from very different backgrounds to their own. Through exchange visits and video links they learn about life in Japan as well as countries in Europe. In this way, pupils' views of the world are greatly extended.

Safeguarding procedures fully meet statutory requirements and the school's extremely well focused procedures ensure that all aspects of safeguarding, child protection and health and safety are understood and rigorously applied by all. The school is a leader of good practice and often advises others about this area. Inclusion is at the heart of all the school's work. Promoting equality and tackling discrimination are supported by an excellent focus on ensuring 'every child matters'. The ways in which the school tackles discrimination for those whose circumstances make them very vulnerable is particularly impressive.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle into school very well and make outstanding progress. They make exceptionally good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and show significant gains in their confidence and independence. The staff work extremely closely with parents and carers to ensure that there are clear judgments on each child's starting point. This enables staff to tailor experiences to individual needs and measure the progress that all children make. The environment provides a stimulating mix of activities that encourage children to initiate activities for themselves as well as those directed by staff. Learning is fun, as seen in an excellent story session about Hansel and Gretel and another excellent art session where children pretended to make a meal using clay. Behaviour is excellent because the children are busily involved in learning. The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is undertaken by senior staff so that it features highly

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

in whole-school developments. The school is rightly improving the access to outdoor learning for the class that has just started in January 2011.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Sixth form

All aspects of the provision have improved significantly since the last inspection so that the changing needs of students entering the sixth form are fully met and all are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their lives. The organisation of the provision mirrors that in the main school, with very specific provision for those with autism and those with cognition and learning needs. Teaching and learning and care, support and guidance are of the same high quality as in the main school. The curriculum is very carefully adapted to the age and ability of students and, as recognised by the SWAN award, provides excellent opportunities which enable them to develop their skills for life. All aspects of the development of their personal qualities and learning skills are exemplary. Leadership is extremely well supported by the senior leadership team, and future developments, including the extension of the vocational work with local colleges, are well thought through.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

Over half of parents and carers returned the questionnaire, an above average return for schools of this type. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive in their views about the school. They indicate that pupils enjoy school, that teaching is good, the school is well led and overall they are happy with the provision. One said, 'I can't praise the school enough' and the inspection shows that such comments are well founded. The inspection team found no evidence to support the few concerns raised during this inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Heritage House School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 46 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 73 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	78	10	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	35	76	11	24	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	24	52	20	43	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	54	19	41	2	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	54	20	43	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	52	21	46	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	52	20	43	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	19	41	22	48	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	63	16	35	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	48	22	48	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	52	20	43	2	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	27	59	19	41	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	63	17	37	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

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.



24 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Heritage House School, Chesham, HP5 3BP

We really enjoyed coming to inspect your school and we found Heritage House to be an outstanding school.

You showed us how happy you are at school and your parents told us how you look forward to coming to school every day. The school keeps you safe and there is always someone to help you and look after you.

We found out that you really enjoy using the trampoline, swimming, Taiko drumming and visits out of school, including some where you stay away from home. The link your school has with the school in Japan is especially impressive in helping you gain a wider view of life. You all behave extremely well and make extremely good progress.

We have asked the staff who take responsibility for particular subjects to look even more closely at the things you do in different classes across the school so that they can make sure your progress is always as good as it possibly can be.

I hope you will help the staff by doing your best all the time you are in school.

Yours sincerely

Kay Charlton

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.