

Charters Ancaster College

Woodsgate Place, Bexhill-on-Sea, TN39 4EB

Inspection dates	5–6 February 2013	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Adequate	3

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- Individual pupils are known very well and their learning and development needs are met.
- Pupils are very happy here. They behave well and receive sensitive care in a well-disciplined environment. Relationships throughout the school are excellent and spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is strong.
- Good teaching and teachers' strong specialist subject knowledge and enthusiasm motivate pupils to become eager and successful learners.
- There is a broad range of subjects on offer. The many additional clubs, activities, trips out and visitors to the school contribute to the wide range of learning experiences.
- Pupils' achieve well over time in all subjects. Standards reached by the oldest pupils in school are consistently at or above expectations for their age. Pupils are particularly well prepared for the next steps in their education.

It is not yet outstanding because

- The headteacher does not routinely or formally observe enough lessons to know where the weaknesses in teaching lie and how they could be improved.
- School improvement plans are not detailed enough or clearly enough linked to securing further improvement in pupils' achievement.
- While teaching is predominantly good, some is no more than adequate.
- Lesson planning is inconsistent throughout the school. Plans do not regularly identify the role of additional adults in promoting learning or include enough opportunities for pupils to develop as independent and active learners.

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

- This inspection was carried out with half a day's notice.
- Inspectors observed 15 lessons taught by 11 different teachers. Inspectors also looked at pupils' workbooks.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, teaching staff and pupils. Documentation and policies, particularly relating to safeguarding, welfare, health and safety were scrutinised. School development plans, evaluations and records of pupils' progress and test results were also examined.
- Inspectors took account of the 22 views of parents and carers recorded in Parent View (Ofsted's on-line questionnaire for parents and carers) as well as a recent survey conducted by the school.

Inspection team

Hillary Macdonald HMI Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Peter Callaghan

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Charters Ancaster College is a small co-educational nursery and preparatory school for children aged from two to 12 years of age. The school is located just outside Bexhill-on-Sea. It was last inspected in November 2009.
- The school was set up by a parents' committee in 1996 and is owned by a charitable trust. A Board of Directors oversees the work of the school.
- There are currently 55 pupils on roll in the main school from Reception to Year 7, taught in five separate classes. In addition there are 79 children on register in the Nursery, which was included within this inspection and 18 younger children cared for within the school's childcare provision.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and the remainder are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. There are currently no pupils with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school aims to 'provide a first class education which identifies and develops the potential of individual pupils and provides them with a grounding which prepares them for life'.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is all good or outstanding by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders make formal checks on the quality of teaching and learning to identify and address any weaknesses
 - increasing the consistency of teachers' planning to ensure that it identifies clearly what all pupils are to learn, defines the role of adults in supporting learning and includes opportunities for pupils to discuss and review their own thinking and learning.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - improving the way leaders and managers interpret and use information on pupil progress to plan actions to further improve pupils' achievement
 - ensuring a more rigorous approach to school improvement planning and review that keep improvements to teaching and pupils' achievement as the focus
 - ensuring checking systems, including the performance management of staff, lesson observations, and a scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' workbooks, are systematically planned, carried out and reviewed.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Pupils' achievement is good overall. Children get off to a positive start in the Nursery and Reception classes. Learning, including language and mathematical development, continues as children move around the enticing indoor and outdoor classroom areas. Individual records of learning, including photographs, observational notes and examples of children's work, reflect the good progress made from starting points in line with expectations for children of this age. In Year 2 pupils were observed to make clear strides in a lesson on 'bossy verbs'. Having constructed a card dragon from a template they considered how best to phrase and order instructional writing. Such active learning and opportunities for discussion led to clear progress. These good rates of progress are not fully consistent in all classes or subjects. In some lessons progress is impeded by too few opportunities for pupils to talk about their thinking and learning.

When reading aloud, pupils in Years 1 and 2 apply their knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) successfully to work out unfamiliar words. In all classes pupils read widely and enjoy a range of texts. By the time they reach the oldest class most pupils are accomplished readers and standards compare favourably with national expectations. Teachers' specialist subject knowledge across the curriculum results in vibrant lessons where new skills are steadily acquired and consolidated. This is further supported by the small class sizes and individualised attention. Lesson observations and pupils' workbooks as well as informal test results demonstrate that pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make good progress over time. Pupils usually reach and exceed expectations for their age by the time they leave school in mathematics and science as well as in English. Achievements in all other curriculum areas are also good and pupils have recently excelled in gymnastics and public speaking competitions. Pupils have been significantly successful in gaining entry to the secondary schools of their choice, including in securing scholarships.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Pupils' behaviour is good and the pastoral care they receive is sensitive and continuous. Teachers have a thorough understanding of pupils' individual needs. Expectations for self-discipline and considerate behaviour are high. In lessons pupils generally work with focused attention and any disruption is rare. When given the opportunity, pupils work together well. Every pupil is encouraged to develop and increase their self-confidence and esteem through participation in school productions and the many extra-curricular clubs and activities provided. The school is an inclusive community where everyone knows each other and is valued. Pupils say they feel safe in this 'family of fifty' and that incidents of bullying are rare. Younger pupils come to speak to older prefects and house captains about their worries and all pupils feel confident to share concerns with teachers. Social interactions and relationships throughout the school are positive. Pupils are articulate about managing risks and display very positive attitudes toward school. Pupils say that work is challenging and that teachers 'push you but you always get a good result'.

The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. It offers many opportunities for pupils to reflect on and develop respect for different faiths and cultures and prepares them appropriately for life in a diverse society. Pupils extend their social skills, develop their understanding of right and wrong, and experience a wide range of cultural activities including the annual Hastings Poetry Festival. The many excellent displays of artwork and photographs recording visits and events demonstrate the breadth of experiences enjoyed by pupils. Pupils visit the theatre and take part in an annual outdoor pursuits' residential course. The 'house' system encourages friendly competition. Pupils reach out to the community through their music, poetry and singing in residential homes, the local church and at charity events. Older pupils organise charity functions to support multiple charities and sponsor two children in Uganda whose education is funded by the proceeds of their charity work. Attendance levels are average.

Quality of teaching**Good**

The quality of teaching is predominantly good. As a result, most pupils and groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, are making good progress linked to their capabilities. They achieve well in all subjects over time. Small classes enable teachers to get to know their pupils very well and to identify precise next steps in learning. Occasionally, the intended learning or next steps are less clearly identified in teachers' planning. When this is the case some pupils find a task too easy or too difficult. Opportunities for pupils to apply their skills and knowledge to problem-solving activities, such as seen in a Years 3 and 4 science lesson, enable pupils to be active and to extend their independent learning skills well. Such opportunities are not fully utilised across the curriculum and a reliance on printed worksheets limits the extent of pupils' individual responses to learning.

Reading is consistently taught well. Tests and assessments recorded every six months provide evidence of good and sometimes rapid progress from individual starting points. The acquisition of pupils' writing and mathematics skills is also closely monitored by class teachers. Formal assessments in these areas as well as in science are regularly completed. This information is shared with parents and carers through written reports and consultations and is also appropriately used by teachers to inform subsequent planning. Additional individualised support is swiftly and flexibly provided to help pupils to overcome any difficulties they are facing. Despite this positive response to pupils' needs, lesson plans do not make the role of additional adults clear and in some lessons support staff are not effectively used to promote learning or good behaviour.

Teachers create a positive climate for learning and pupils are interested and engaged in the variety of topics covered. In the best lessons, teachers use questioning to assess pupils' understanding and frequent opportunities exist for pupils to discuss their thinking and learning in pairs or groups. This good practice has been highlighted and is being extended throughout the school. Older pupils know the targets they are working towards and demonstrate a mature ability to self-assess the quality of their own work and progress. Pupils' workbooks are marked regularly and often contain comments which help pupils understand what they need to do to improve.

Quality of curriculum**Good**

The curriculum is good and is rich and varied. It offers a broad subject base, taught to the older pupils by a number of specialist subject teachers who are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. This enthusiasm is successfully conveyed to the pupils and they report that they are learning well in all of their subjects. Their positive views are endorsed by inspectors. Some of the very youngest children in school receive a small amount of specialist teaching, for example in physical education, although they are also supported by their own teacher or a well-known adult. Opportunities for all pupils to make progress in developing their reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills are secured through a topic approach for the younger pupils. Topics, such as 'journeys' or 'outer space' link curriculum areas and ensure that the essential key skills are reinforced across all subjects, contributing towards their good overall achievement. Appropriate curriculum plans are in place for all subjects and all year groups and are suited to the needs of all groups of pupils. Informal arrangements made by the teachers of the older pupils enable subjects to be co-ordinated to ensure a consistent approach to the development of literacy and mathematics. Education for personal, social and health education is good and well supported by the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities offered. Frequent trips and visits, visitors to the school and extra-curricular activities support pupils in becoming well-rounded accomplished individuals. The school provides very good opportunities for all pupils to take part and perform in drama, choral and musical activities and productions.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety**Good**

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. Staff provide close supervision of pupils including formal and informal times of the day, at school clubs and on school trips. During lunchtimes, support staff ensure that pupils eat well and healthily and sit in small groupings that promote social skills. Pupils particularly enjoy the special birthday lunches. There are frequent opportunities for pupils of all ages to be active throughout the school day. Pupils are individually known to staff and are well cared for. As a result of this caring supervision pupils feel safe.

All the required policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils, including those relating to child protection, anti-bullying, first aid and safe recruitment of staff, are up to date and are regularly reviewed. Staff have received appropriate and ongoing training in these areas. Procedures are understood by all staff who give the highest priority to safeguarding their pupils. Risk assessments are frequent and proportionate. For example, daily checks are made of immediate environments and weekly checks of the school mini bus as well as routine checks of fire alarms and extinguishers. All the independent schools' regulations are met. Admission arrangements and attendance registers are adequately reviewed and monitored.

A consistent, yet flexible, approach to behaviour management is taken by the school. Rewards, including house points and 'golden awards' which result in a celebratory letter home are valued by the pupils. When minor transgressions occur these are recorded by class teachers and an overview is maintained by the headteacher. If necessary additional communication with parents and carers is established and additional support in class provided to ensure pupils settle and progress. Serious incidents are extremely rare and while there is a central record, there have been no entries recently. Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying and how to keep themselves safe. They are confident in the support of school staff to resolve any concerns.

Leadership and management**Adequate**

The leadership and management of the school are adequate. Senior leaders are committed to ensuring that all pupils receive a good and well-rounded education. However, systems to ensure this is the case lack rigour. Lessons and pupils' workbooks are not routinely monitored. As a result, there is an insufficiently precise view of what should be done to improve teaching further. While teachers submit planning in advance to the headteacher, inconsistencies in the quality of planning, though identified as an area for improvement, have not been thoroughly addressed. Careful attention to the recruitment of staff has ensured that teachers are knowledgeable, skilled and experienced, but ongoing performance management is underdeveloped. Many informal opportunities are taken to discuss teaching and learning and the progress that individual pupils are making. In this way, coupled with the scrutiny of results of regular assessment tests, the headteacher possesses a broad view of the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement. Additional targeted support for pupils either in the classroom or individually is provided as a result of these discussions and test results. Staff and pupils explain that these interventions are beneficial, although no formal evaluations exist. Individual profiles of progress are kept for all pupils and these demonstrate achievement that compares favourably with national standards. However, the school does not systematically analyse information on pupils' progress in order to judge their own success and plan further improvements.

School self-evaluation is broadly accurate but development plans lack detail. These tend to take the form of lists rather than clear priorities with time frames and opportunities to monitor and evaluate progress in improving teaching and pupils' achievements. The Board of Directors and management team make a significant contribution to school planning and review and to ensure parents and carers are well informed. All of the information about the school which parents and carers require is on the school website and available in hard copy. There is an 'open-door' policy for parents and carers to pass on messages or raise concerns and all staff are readily accessible. Good quality information

regarding pupils' progress and attitudes is shared through regular reports and meetings. Effective procedures are in place for handling any complaints. Directors accept that there has been a lack of rigour in their performance management of senior leaders as well as too little focus on the impact of their work on improving teaching and learning.

The premises and accommodation are suitable, well maintained, well presented and very clean. The large garden is well used all year and the astro-turf facility complements indoor facilities. The independent school standards are met.

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 the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	131279
Inspection number	408720
DfE registration number	845/6042

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	Nursery and preparatory school
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	2–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	55
Number of part time pupils	79
Proprietor	Per Thorkildsen
Chair	Per Thorkildsen
Headteacher	Miriam Black
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2009
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,860
Telephone number	01424 216670
Fax number	01424 223525
Email address	office@chartersancaster.com

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.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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 information 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'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

