

Twycross House School

1 Main Road, Twycross, Atherstone, CV9 3PL

Inspection dates	20–21 February 2013	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Outstanding	1
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- It is well led and managed. Good achievement has been maintained over recent years.
- Teaching is good and promotes pupils' good achievement. Some teaching is outstanding.
- There are outstanding arrangements to safeguard pupils' welfare, health and safety.
- Pupils' personal skills are developed exceptionally well. Their behaviour is outstanding.
- The curriculum is outstanding and ensures pupils are prepared extremely well for the next stage of their education and their future lives.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Leaders do not check closely enough on the progress pupils make as they move through the school so that they know where teaching is weaker.
- They do not do enough to make sure that the small amount of adequate teaching improves quickly to be at least good.
- Sometimes teachers do not plan work that challenges pupils of different abilities to do as well as they should.
- Occasionally, teachers talk for too long and do not give pupils time to apply their learning.
- Written feedback is not always good enough to help pupils improve their work.

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 21 lessons taught by 20 teachers, looked at pupils’ work, met with the headmaster and headmistress, other senior leaders and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors looked at the school’s documentation including schemes of work, teachers’ planning, records of pupils’ attainment, monitoring reports of teaching and school improvement plans. They checked the school’s compliance with the regulations for independent schools.
- Inspectors took account of the views expressed by 47 parents and carers on Parent View, 282 pupil responses to the online survey and 41 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Joanne Harvey, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Peter McKenzie

Additional Inspector

Janet Bird

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Twycross House School is an independent, selective day school in Twycross, near Atherstone in Warwickshire. It was founded in 1977 and is privately owned. The school has two headteachers. One of the headteachers and his wife are the proprietors of the school.
- The school provides full time education for 348 girls and boys aged eight to 18 years. Most pupils are drawn from within a twenty mile radius; many come from local villages and others from nearby towns.
- It is one of two local schools operating under the Twycross House name, the other being the associated pre-preparatory school which is inspected separately. Both schools operate in a cluster of listed buildings in a preservation area next to the village green.
- Most pupils are White British with a very few from other ethnic backgrounds. None are in the early stages of learning to speak English. The school caters for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs but does not admit pupils with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school was last inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate in November 2009.
- The school aims to 'endeavour to cultivate a supportive and guiding environment where our pupils can flourish and achieve their full potential'.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and, therefore, pupils' achievement by:
 - developing the systems to check closely on the progress pupils make as they move through the school to quickly identify weaker teaching
 - making regular checks on the quality of teaching in lessons and in pupils' work so that teachers can be provided quickly with the guidance and support they need to improve
 - ensuring that teachers provide pupils of all abilities with work that challenges them to do as well as they can
 - ensuring that teachers do not talk for too long and pupils get time to apply their learning
 - providing written feedback which helps pupils to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Pupils' achievement is good overall. Good teaching ensures that the vast majority of pupils of all backgrounds, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make good progress over time. The majority enter the school having attained above average standards in most subjects at the associated pre-preparatory school. A few enter from other settings with a wider range of attainment. They leave Twycross House School having attained high standards in all subjects. Results in both GCSE and A-level examinations are high in comparison with the national average, particularly the proportions attaining the highest grades. The overwhelming majority are successful in gaining places at universities of their choice.

The extremely well extended curriculum secures pupils' excellent broader skills which prepares them very well for the future. Pupils are confident and articulate when participating in debate. They read widely and write fluently and convincingly in a range of genres. Their numeracy skills are similarly well developed. They are able to apply these skills to solve problems and illustrate their ideas to a high standard and with great clarity in other subjects. Pupils are renowned for the great deal of success they enjoy at local, county, regional and national levels in an extensive range of individual and team sporting fixtures and competitions which number over 350 a year. Pupils are also quite rightly very proud of their achievements in the creative arts. There are regular music recitals and dramatic productions which include contemporary musicals and the plays of Shakespeare. Pupils' art work, exhibited throughout the school, shows high levels of skill and creativity, but also demonstrates their ability to perceive and reflect on significant world issues and events.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They respond exceptionally well to the respect they are shown by adults, and are highly considerate and supportive of one another. Relationships are warm and courteous. Pupils say they feel absolutely safe in school. One volunteered, 'I have never, ever, felt at risk.' They have a thorough understanding of the ways they can keep themselves safe, including from cyber-bullying. They state that bullying of any type is not tolerated. Pupils are confident that should problems arise these would be dealt with swiftly and effectively. Younger pupils say they would confide in older pupils because they get on so well together. Older pupils volunteer enthusiastically to support the learning of younger peers in regular sessions before school. Pupils enjoy school a great deal and show this through high attendance. Punctuality is the norm and absence is exceptionally rare.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. There are abundant opportunities to reflect on ultimate questions. During a religious education lesson, pupils in Year 9 demonstrated their ability to maturely reflect, empathise and discuss their ideas about 'suffering'. The programme for personal, social and health education helps pupils to very successfully develop their self-confidence and self-esteem, as does the academic success they enjoy. It also ensures that they have a good understanding of the importance of promoting equal opportunity and are prepared well for life in a multi-cultural society. Pupils demonstrate their clear understanding of right and wrong. The strong moral code is embedded in the school's ethos. Pupils have confidence that high moral standards will be upheld by others. 'If you lose anything you go to the office and always get it back,' said one. Frequent residential experiences broaden horizons. Pupils' cultural understanding is further developed through, for example, the experience of music, drama and art from other cultures. Notice boards around the school are full of promotions for the many fundraising activities that the pupils initiate themselves out of their concern to help others.

Quality of teaching**Good**

The quality of teaching is good. It promotes good progress over time, as evidenced in lessons and in pupils' work. There is a low pupil-to-teacher ratio. This allows teachers to get to know pupils well and provide well-judged support, often outside lesson time, particularly where there is a concern that pupils may not reach their targets. Teachers promote pupils' personal development exceptionally well and secure their positive attitudes to learning. Teachers are experts in their field. In the outstanding lessons seen, teachers often use their subject knowledge creatively to inspire pupils to contribute their ideas, work independently and rapidly develop curiosity and the skills to find out things for themselves. In a few lessons, pupils listen to the teacher talking for too long. In most lessons, teachers make sure that every pupil, whatever their ability, is given work that challenges them to think and improve. They use questions carefully to check for and address any misunderstandings or to extend learning further. They change their plans on the spot if necessary. In the few lessons seen which were adequate, this was not always the case; all pupils were given the same task which was too hard for some and too easy for others. Some could not complete the work and others worked through mundane activities before moving on to something which stretched them. Teachers do everything possible to make sure that resources are provided to minimise any barriers to learning for disabled pupils. Pupils' work is marked regularly and often contains encouraging comments which help them to gain in self-esteem. However, teachers' written comments do not always make clear what pupils need to do to improve, or comments are not addressed by pupils or followed up by teachers.

Quality of curriculum**Outstanding**

The curriculum is outstanding. The school prides itself on the extensive range of academic courses on offer with rarely a restriction on subject combinations. Indeed, subjects are provided, on a one-to-one basis if necessary, in order to maximise each pupil's chance of being successful in their application for their chosen degree course. For example, Greek is offered alongside the sciences for those seeking a career in medicine. The school also offers more specialist subjects, such as electronics, classical civilisation and critical thinking, alongside the traditional academic range.

The curriculum is rich and varied. It offers pupils excellent opportunities to develop new skills and interests beyond formal academic study. It ensures that pupils become very well rounded individuals and develop the essential skills needed to succeed in higher education and in adult life. Various additional computer courses are offered. For those not interested in competitive sports, alternative indoor and outdoor pursuits are promoted through extra-curricular clubs and a fitness suite. There are opportunities to develop and pursue an interest in the creative arts or experience travel and the outdoors through many first hand experiences of theatres, galleries and field trips in this country and overseas. The Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award is achieved by a good many pupils. As one pupil said, 'There is always something for everyone'.

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

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding and all the regulatory requirements are met. Pupils are well known to staff and extremely well cared for. All the required policies and procedures for safeguarding young people are implemented rigorously, and monitored and updated regularly. They include those for child protection and the safer recruitment of staff; fire safety; first aid; and health and safety. Staff training in all these areas is up-to-date and the school ensures a high level of supervision and expertise at all times. Procedures are well understood by all staff who give the highest priority to safeguarding pupils, including those for managing behaviour and tackling bullying. Parents and carers who responded to Parent View have every confidence in the school's procedures, as do pupils who have a clear understanding of the rewards and sanctions policy. The school promotes safe and healthy lifestyles very successfully through lessons on personal, social and health education and through aspects of other subjects.

Attendance registers are completed carefully and any absence is followed up immediately.

Leadership and management

Good

The leadership and management of the school are good. Leaders have ensured that the independent school standards have been met through rigorous monitoring and application of policies and procedures. The headteachers and senior staff ensure that all pupils have a good and very well-rounded education. They have been successful in promoting their strong ethos of care, the excellent promotion of welfare and safety, and an outstanding curriculum which results in pupils developing excellent personal skills and achieving high standards in their academic studies. The way the environment has been created and resources provided also plays a significant part in this success. The buildings, some of which are 300 years old, have been carefully renovated, added to sensitively and are maintained to an excellent standard. The grounds include gardens, sports pitches and playing fields. There is a hall, computer suite, new science laboratories, a pottery room, a library, a sports hall, an indoor swimming pool and outdoor tennis courts. Careful checking takes place to ensure the premises and accommodation are suitable and safe.

The headteachers are aware of the school's most significant strengths and areas in which they need to improve. There are some systems in place for monitoring the work of the school, including the quality of teaching and learning. These include checking lesson plans, observing teachers at work in lessons and looking at pupils' work but these checks are not carried out systematically. As a result, senior leaders and heads of department do not have a clear picture about where the strengths and weaknesses in teaching lie. Most teaching is good and some is outstanding, but decisive action has not been taken to ensure that the teaching which is adequate becomes good or better. Leaders collect a great deal of information about how well pupils do in tests and examinations and ensure support is provided to ensure pupils meet their targets. They have only just begun to collect information at more regular intervals about how well pupils make progress over their time at the school.

Parents, carers and the pupils themselves are highly supportive of the leaders' work and are successfully and routinely engaged in helping to promote its continued success. They are provided with all the information they require in the school prospectus, on the website or in other regular communications and pupils' reports. The complaints procedure meets all requirements.

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	120331
Inspection number	409500
DfE registration number	855/6006

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	Selective co-educational day school
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	8–18 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	348
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Steven Assinder and Roxanne Assinder
Chair	N/a
Headteacher	Steven Assinder and Nicola Lilley (Joint headteachers)
Date of previous school inspection	16–19 November 2009
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,860–£8,850
Telephone number	01827 880651
Fax number	N/a
Email address	enquiries@twycrosshouseschool.org.uk

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