

# St Christopher's The Hall School

49 Bromley Road, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 5PA

<b>Inspection dates</b>	4-6 March 2014	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### This school is good because

- Pupils' outstanding behaviour and personal development are clearly seen in their exceptionally high levels of self-esteem, self-confidence and self-discipline. Pupils love their school and are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Teaching is mostly good throughout the school and enables pupils to make good overall progress, including those with specific learning difficulties. Improvements in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection are resulting in even faster rates of progress.
- The curriculum serves the needs of all pupils well and has significant strengths. It supports pupils' personal development exceptionally well.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is good. Pupils feel safe and thrive in a caring and inclusive environment.
- School leaders and staff share the same high ambition to secure the best outcomes for pupils. As a result, teaching and achievement are good. Priorities for further improvement are identified accurately. Governors support the school very effectively. Parents express a high level of satisfaction with the school.

### It is not yet outstanding because

- Inconsistencies in teaching, assessment and the curriculum throughout the school lead to some uneven progress within subjects and between some classes.
- The leadership and management of the school need strengthening for pupils to achieve outstandingly well. The governors do not challenge the school sufficiently robustly.

### 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

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspectors observed 21 part lessons taught by 19 teachers, one of which was a joint observation with the headteacher. They listened to pupils read. They met with leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and pupils.
- Pupils' work, management plans and documents relating to pupils' progress, staff appraisals, and health and safety, were analysed.
- The inspectors took account of 120 parental responses to a survey carried out by the school just before the inspection, 46 parental responses to Ofsted's online survey (Parent View) and questionnaire responses from 15 staff.

## Inspection team

Michèle Messaoudi, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Rory O'Doherty	Additional Inspector
Sandra Teacher	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Christopher's The Hall School is a co-educational independent preparatory day school that was founded in 1893 and is registered for up to 295 pupils aged from two to 11 years. It is located in the residential area of Beckenham in Kent. It occupies a large Grade II listed Georgian building, extended over time, and uses local facilities for cricket, rugby and swimming. There is a before- and after-school play scheme for children who attend the school. The school prepares pupils for entry into selective, independent and maintained schools. The school had its first inspection by Ofsted in February 2008 and was last inspected in February 2011.
- Currently, there are 289 pupils on roll, aged from two-and-a-half to 11 years. There are 84 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, of whom 48 attend part time and five are under three years of age. These children are taught in five classes. In each year group from Reception to Year 6, pupils are taught in two parallel classes of up to 18 pupils. Few pupils have learning difficulties. None has a statement of special educational needs.
- The current headteacher has been in post since 2000 and teaches part time. The school has charity status and the proprietorial body is a limited company. A board of seven directors acts as the governing body.
- The school seeks to encourage children 'to maximise their potential and to work and play to the best of their ability ... in a happy, caring and secure environment, where good manners and respect for others are highly regarded and learning is structured and fun'.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Help pupils to make outstanding progress by ensuring that teachers consistently:
  - share and implement the best teaching practices that exist in the school
  - set learning targets that challenge pupils with more rigour
  - give pupils written feedback in their marking that always shows them exactly what to do to improve in all subjects, and ensure that pupils use this guidance in future work
  - reduce the use of worksheets where this is excessive to further extend pupils' creativity and to promote their reading, writing and learning skills.
- Further strengthen the leadership and management of the school so that pupils can achieve outstandingly well by ensuring that:
  - pupils' learning is assessed more frequently throughout the school to build a stronger picture of pupils' ongoing progress
  - the information from assessments is used more effectively to challenge all pupils in all subjects throughout the school
  - teachers' appraisals relate more accurately to current priorities for raising achievement and that checks on teaching and learning are sufficiently frequent to lead to consistent improvements
  - subject leaders are helped to develop their skills further to improve their effectiveness
  - arrangements are made to enable the governing body to challenge the school more robustly.

## Inspection judgements

### Pupils' achievement

**Good**

Pupils achieve well from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards because of the good teaching, a good curriculum and an extremely positive ethos. By the end of Kindergarten, children develop competencies that are mostly above age-related expectations. By the end of Reception, a high proportion of children exceed the expected goals in nearly all areas of learning, which represents good progress. From Year 1 to Year 6, most pupils make good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science and, as shown by the school's data, an increasing number have made outstanding progress in English and mathematics in recent years. By the end of Year 5, most pupils' levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics are well above national expectations, so that pupils are very well prepared for entry examinations to selective secondary schools at the beginning of Year 6. Pupils move on to their first choice secondary school and a high proportion are awarded scholarships. Pupils who have specific learning difficulties also make good progress and succeed in attaining levels that are in line with national expectations or higher by the end of Year 6 because of the excellent, targeted support they receive. Pupils who are gifted in one or more academic subjects, or are talented in non-academic subjects, are extended very effectively through the enrichment programme. They achieve very highly in drama, music and sports.

Even so, pupils' progress is good rather than outstanding because of some inconsistencies in teaching and the curriculum. For example, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make exceptional progress in their personal, social and emotional development and most make excellent progress in their literacy and numeracy skills. However, their development is less strong in the creative and technological areas of learning and in their understanding of the world. From Years 1 to 6, although pupils apply and develop their reading, writing, mathematical, creative, enquiry and thinking skills in geography, history, religious education and science, they do so inconsistently. This is mainly because, in almost every class, there is excessive use of worksheets in one or two of these subjects, slowing their subject progress as well as the development of extended writing skills.

### Pupils' behaviour and personal development

**Outstanding**

Pupils' outstanding behaviour and personal development are supported by excellent pastoral care and a rich curriculum. From the Kindergarten onwards, pupils respond extremely well to the excellent role models presented by the staff and the caring and warm environment which they provide. Pupils are very well mannered, considerate, respectful and friendly. Their behaviour is exemplary, as shown by their enthusiasm, application and high level of contribution in class. Pupils demonstrate that they know how to keep safe and they trust teachers to deal with any concern very effectively. They have a good understanding of all forms of bullying. Instances of bullying and the need to apply serious sanctions are extremely rare. Pupils report that they feel safe and enjoy harmonious relationships. They are happy and love their school. Their attendance and punctuality are good.

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Exceptionally good provision for drama, music and sports, and a high take up in a wide range of clubs, ensure that each pupil can find something at which they can excel. A thoughtfully structured reward system and celebration assemblies recognise pupils' achievements, progress, efforts and moral qualities. As a result, pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem are exceptionally high. Pupils have ample opportunities to take on responsibilities and they develop excellent social skills within the school community, for example through the work of the active school council. They have shown initiative when campaigning for better school meals, coordinating the 'walk to school' week and organising a talent show. The school takes appropriate steps to ensure that balanced views are presented if any contested political issues are considered. Pupils contribute to numerous

charities, for example to support children who are disabled or have arthritis through sponsored walks or selling cakes. They develop a good awareness of diversity and public institutions through the curriculum, educational visits and charity work. Their cultural development is promoted extremely well through the creative work undertaken and enrichment activities.

### Quality of teaching

**Good**

Teaching is good overall throughout the school, with an increasing proportion that is outstanding. As a result, pupils make good progress. Teaching is not yet outstanding overall as inconsistencies remain within subjects throughout the school, and sometimes between classes. Teachers know their pupils really well and establish positive relationships and very effective working routines. They have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. The teaching is underpinned by good subject knowledge and expert knowledge of examination requirements. Teaching assistants support pupils' learning very effectively, and some are highly skilled.

Where the teaching is outstanding, pupils' knowledge and understanding of a topic are built up systematically through questioning in lessons, and the methods used enable pupils to explore the topic in depth, solve problems and create their own solutions. Individual pupils are challenged to demonstrate their working out and solutions on the board. Frequent checks on learning enable the teacher to intervene early to support or extend individual pupils, by using further questioning or giving them clear verbal feedback. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are developed well in subjects other than English and mathematics. Marking is consistently helpful. Where pupils experience all these features in teaching, they make outstanding progress. Where the teaching is good overall, these features are found in several, but not all, subjects.

In all classes from Years 1 to 6, worksheets are used excessively in at least one subject and limit the further promotion of pupils' reading, writing, creative and learning skills. Occasionally, the planned activities do not enable pupils to make better than adequate progress because they do not sufficiently take into account their differing abilities. At times, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the adults are not sufficiently engaged with children to support their learning when lessons are taught by a subject specialist who is not familiar with all aspects of children's development.

Throughout the school, pupils' learning is assessed regularly, but not frequently enough, to build a full picture of pupils' ongoing progress, and so be able to take earlier measures to extend or support them. Teachers mostly use the information from assessments to set learning targets for individual pupils and so help them to improve. However, these targets are not consistently challenging. Marking is always encouraging, but does not always tell pupils exactly what to do to improve. When it does, the teacher does not always ensure that pupils take this guidance into account to improve their work.

### Quality of curriculum

**Good**

The curriculum is good and enables pupils to achieve well throughout the school. The curriculum is broad and balanced, serves the needs of all pupils well and prepares them very well for their future. It has significant strengths. Personal, social, health and education (PSHE), coupled with an exceptional programme of educational visits and other enrichment activities, contributes to pupils' outstanding personal development. All pupils have access to a wide range of clubs to extend their literacy, numeracy, technological, physical and artistic skills. The curriculum benefits from specialist teaching from Reception to Year 6 in information and communication technology (ICT), French, drama, music, and physical education (PE). However, this arrangement does not always work well. While Kindergarten and Reception teachers show a good understanding of the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, not all of the specialists who also teach in the setting do so. The provision for drama, music and PE is very strong and pupils achieve very highly in these subjects. The school supports pupils who are exceptionally talented in drama, music, and sports to compete at regional or national level. There are plans to extend enrichment

activities further. Throughout the school, there is a strong focus on language for communication, reading, writing and mathematics. Reading is taught systematically from Kindergarten onwards and pupils are encouraged to write creatively and at length, albeit not consistently in all subjects. Pupils learn science through frequent practical activities which develop their enquiry skills well.

There are very effective arrangements to support pupils who have specific learning difficulties and those at risk of falling behind their peers. The school leaders identify strengths and areas for improvement correctly through checks on teaching and pupils' learning. The curriculum is not outstanding because while checks to evaluate its effectiveness ensure pupils can make good progress, they are not quite rigorous enough to remedy minor weaknesses and so help pupils to make outstanding progress.

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

**Good**

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety has improved since the last inspection and is now good. It is underpinned by a strong commitment to keeping pupils safe, happy and healthy and excellent pastoral care. All the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and for independent schools are met. Pupils demonstrate greater awareness of, and commitment to, healthy eating. They appreciate the new caterers and say that the food provided is now of exceptional quality; all pupils have school meals. Safety education is good and includes road safety, safety in the community and basic e-safety. The school funds a road crossing officer and has gained a platinum award from the borough for its travel plan. Supervision is vigilant on and off site. Safeguarding arrangements are robust.

All adults working at the school are properly vetted and all the mandatory recruitment checks are recorded correctly in a single central register. All staff are trained in child protection to the appropriate standards and at the required intervals. The staff are supported well by detailed safeguarding policies and any concerns are recorded rigorously. The policies and procedures for anti-bullying, behaviour and health and safety are up to date and implemented consistently. The inspectors looked into concerns expressed by a very small number of parents and carers. They found that the few instances of bullying that have occurred were dealt with very effectively by the school. Arrangements for first aid and pupils who need medication are very good. There is a high number of first aiders, and several have paediatric qualifications. Minor omissions in the first aid policy were rectified during the inspection. Risk assessments for off-site visits, on-site activities and the premises are thorough. The school can demonstrate it has a suitable standard of fire safety, but should consider carrying out additional emergency evacuation drills in the Kindergarten to ensure all children are totally familiarised with the process.

### **Leadership and management**

**Good**

Good leadership and management ensure that pupils achieve well, that teaching and the curriculum are good, and pupils are cared for well. The staff successfully create an extremely positive ethos in which all pupils can thrive. Pupils' behaviour and personal development are outstanding as a result of excellent pastoral care and a wealth of enrichment activities. The senior leaders ensure that all the standards for independent schools are met, and that parents and carers receive the full range of information to which they are entitled, including the complaints procedure. Partnerships with parents are good and most parents express a high level of satisfaction with the school. The premises are maintained well and constantly developed to further support effective and safe learning.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and further improvements are supported by a clear management plan. There is a structured programme to appraise staff and ensure their continuous professional development. However, teachers' appraisals do not always relate accurately enough to the school's current priorities for raising achievement. Checks on teaching and learning are not

always sufficiently frequent and robust to lead to consistent improvements. In recognition of the need to further improve teaching and teachers' knowledge of the curriculum, subject leaders were appointed in January 2013. While they show a good understanding of their role, have reviewed planning in their areas and observed their colleagues teach, they have not yet sampled pupils' work and their skills in monitoring and as middle leaders are still developing. Leaders do not check as well as they might that information from assessments is used effectively to challenge all pupils in all subjects. The governing body supports the school well but recognises that it needs to make arrangements to challenge the school more robustly.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	101687
<b>Inspection number</b>	442985
<b>DfE registration number</b>	305/6010

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Day preparatory school
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	289
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	48
<b>Proprietor</b>	St Christopher's The Hall School Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Christopher Hilditch
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andrew Velasco
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17–18 February 2011
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£6,000 to £7,950
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8650 2200
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