

The White House School

Heath Road, Whitchurch, SY13 2AA

Inspection dates	2–4 July 2014	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school

- Pupils are enthusiastic learners who are committed to doing their best. They make good progress and achievement is good throughout the school, allowing most to go onto the secondary school of their choice.
- Teachers enthuse their pupils and help them gain a love of learning through their effective teaching.
- There is a strong sense of community and exemplary behaviour reinforces the ability of pupils to learn, as well as to get on together, in an environment free from bullying and negative behaviour.
- Pupils say they feel safe and this helps them to learn in a very supportive atmosphere.
- The headteacher, who is also the proprietor, has a clear vision for the school. An important part of this is the commitment to a strongly creative element in which pupils participate enthusiastically in music, art and drama.
- Since the last inspection, good academic standards have been maintained. The attainment of many pupils remains above that generally found. Care is also taken to support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs so that they can also fulfil their potential in this improving school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The most-able pupils are not always fully challenged to fulfil their potential, especially in mathematics.
- There is a lack of consistency in the ways in which teachers mark pupils' work.
- The system for monitoring and appraising teachers' work is too informal and teachers' professional development opportunities lack clear direction.

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

- A total of eleven lessons were observed, covering all classes and teachers who were present during the inspection.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher (who is also the proprietor) and other staff with specific responsibilities.
- The views of parents were gathered from the 23 replies to the online Parent View survey, from talking to parents who were dropping off their children at the start of the day and from an email received from a parent during the inspection.
- Many staff responded to the staff questionnaire and inspectors spoke to staff throughout the inspection in order to gather their views about the school.
- A group of representative pupils met with an inspector and as many pupils as possible were spoken to during the inspection so that their views could be taken into account. A survey of pupils' views undertaken by Ofsted was also taken into consideration.
- Inspectors listened to some pupils reading. They looked at pupils' work during visits to lessons. A detailed scrutiny of the written work of a sample of pupils was undertaken.
- Inspectors also looked at a range of written documentation, including information on the progress of pupils, teachers' marking and planning, the schools' development planning and a range of policies and procedures, including those for safeguarding.

Inspection team

Martyn Groucutt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter McKenzie

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The White House is an independent day school for pupils between the ages of three and 11 years. There are currently 79 boys and 87 girls on the register, a total of 166 pupils. Twenty two children are in receipt of the government's nursery funding.
- The school aims to provide an effective preparation for pupils who wish to go on to the independent sector or grammar schools for their secondary education, although some also go on the local comprehensive school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average. None currently have a statement of special educational needs.
- Virtually all pupils are of White British origin.
- The school was last inspected in January 2009.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In every class ensure that the most-able pupils are always fully stretched and challenged in the work they are given, particularly in mathematics.
- Raise the quality of all marking to that of the best by:
 - where it is appropriate, making comments about how work could be further improved
 - allowing pupils time for corrections and improvement when work has been marked
 - promoting a whole-school agreement on how pupils' work should be marked so that there is a greater consistency of practice.
- Develop a more formal assessment of the effectiveness of classroom practice by:
 - introducing an agreed programme of lesson observations covering the school year
 - developing a more formal appraisal process for all teachers
 - using this process to more clearly identify and meet professional development needs.

Inspection judgements

Achievement of pupils

Good

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and experiences that are around or slightly below those typically found for their age, with social skills being their weakest area. As a result of good teaching, they make good progress so that when they start Year 1 virtually all have met or exceeded the Early Years Learning Goals.
- Pupils continue to make good progress and by the end of Year 2 the proportion working at above the expected level is greater than that usually found. There are no significant differences in progress between boys and girls. This good progress is maintained right through the school and by the time they leave at the end of Year 6 a clear majority are working above the level expected of pupils at that age. Over time around 20 per cent of the year group are working at the level expected of 14 year olds in mathematics.
- A high proportion of pupils who are seeking admission and scholarships for independent or grammar school places are successful.
- The more able are identified in the school's gifted and talented register. At the start of the year challenging targets are set. They are measurable, so that teachers can monitor the progress made by pupils towards meeting these targets through the year.
- That said, while they are well stretched and make good progress, the most able could sometimes be given even greater challenge in their work. In mathematics, for example, there is sometimes page after page of similar activities all marked correct, so obviously understood. Pupils could have been moved forward more quickly in this situation.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress and achieve well. A specialist teacher supports disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Their progress is monitored carefully. Individual education programmes containing time-limited and measurable targets are developed in conjunction with the classroom teacher and parents. Additional support is specified and effective, supporting these pupils good progress.
- Reading is prominent throughout the school. Right from the start, children undertake highly effective work in phonics (the understanding of letters and the sound they make). Many pupils quickly become fluent readers and this is supported by daily practice. This includes opportunities to read aloud to teaching assistants or to volunteer parents.
- Pupils gain knowledge and understanding in a wide range of skills, including those of reading, writing, communication and mathematics, and achievement is good. They also develop excellent skills and reach high standards in a range of creative areas such as music, art and drama because they receive outstanding support.

Quality of teaching

Good

- Teaching is at least good and some is outstanding because it is effective in helping pupils to make good progress. Teachers assess the progress of their pupils in reading, spelling and mathematics in November and June, gaining evidence of the progress being made by each from their individual starting points which they use effectively to push learning forward.

- The learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are all met, helping pupils get off to a good start. Social skills improve rapidly as teachers look for frequent opportunities for children to share and collaborate, which also help to develop their skills in speaking and listening. Progress, including that in reading, writing and mathematics, is clear and sustained right throughout the school from that good start.
- When a pupil has an individual education plan to support specific needs, teachers and their teaching assistants implement its requirements effectively, supporting the good progress of these pupils. This reflects the good relationships between teachers and their assistants which help create effective classrooms.
- Pupils identified as gifted or talented are also well supported, although there is the issue of even greater challenge sometimes being possible. When pupils show a wider talent, such as in music, care is also taken to ensure that there are opportunities to develop these skills fully.
- Teachers have high expectations, to which pupils respond positively. In addition to the more usual primary-age practice of being taught by a class teacher, pupils benefit from also being taught a range of specialist subject teachers during the week. They bring their specific skills and enthusiasm for their subject. This has a powerful impact on pupils' learning and enjoyment of lessons.
- Teachers plan with care and regularly ask good questions in their lessons. This not only helps them to assess the extent of pupils' understanding but also promotes lively discussion. This helps pupils to think more deeply about their work and underpins the progress they make.
- The opportunities for all pupils to participate in music, art and drama are seized enthusiastically. This was reflected in the obvious enjoyment of all pupils from participation in the end-of-year concert that took place during the inspection. This is one example of the school's strong commitment to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Other examples are seen in the school's International School award, its practical links with schools in Africa and in France, and the opportunities for reflection in daily assemblies.
- Marking is done regularly and nearly always contains praise for achievement. What is not always so clear are comments about how work could be made even better. In the best marking there is an element of dialogue between a pupil and the teacher, but at times it is not clear that there is time for correction or improvement before the class move on.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Throughout the school they are eager and enthusiastic learners, enjoying their work. As a result, no time is lost because of bad behaviour or, for example, pupils being slow to return to class after breaks. This has a powerful impact on the progress made throughout the school. Most pupils show a great pride in their school and develop a strong sense of self-awareness and self-confidence.
- Pupil's behaviour is also exemplary beyond their classrooms. They willingly help and support each other, and are pleased to be able to take a variety of additional responsibilities. In the playground boys play with girls, older pupils with the younger, all of which helps to create and sustain very positive relationships. This is equally true of their relationships with staff. This is another example of the very strong promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the school.

- Because pupils enjoy coming to school very much attendance is high. Many parents emphasised this, expressing very positive comments about behaviour and safety generally.
- In this supportive setting, pupils insist that bullying is not an issue. They are aware of bullying in its different forms, including an understanding of cyber-bullying and that based on prejudice against individuals or groups, because they have covered it in lessons.
- The school has the highest level of the International School award, of which it is rightly proud. Pupils have a good awareness of other cultures and show positive attitudes to other backgrounds, cultures and creeds. They are well-prepared for life in multi-cultural Britain even though virtually all are from a White British background.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Parents who responded to the Parent View survey strongly feel their children are safe and enjoy going to school. All the safeguarding and welfare requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage are met. This is then sustained throughout the school with, for example, staff well trained in child protection requirements. Careful risk assessments are made whenever pupils go on a trip or visit. All the necessary checks and procedures that seek to ensure the safety of people and premises are in place.

Leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, who is also the proprietor, has a clear vision and has created a school where positive attitudes and hard work are the norm. This enables many pupils to be successful and to go on to the secondary school of their choice. At the same time, the creative abilities of every pupil are developed and supported. One member of staff said, 'In some ways it is more like a family than a school and I feel extremely lucky to be a part of it'.
- The deputy headteacher works closely with the headteacher to support effective leadership. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, effective tracking of the progress of each child reflects the good leadership of that phase. This enables children to make good progress from the start. However, elsewhere the role of subject leaders is not fully developed.
- The curriculum is broad and, because teachers use the information they have on the levels being reached by each pupil, they are able to ensure that everyone is able to learn at the right level. It enables pupils to make good progress in all areas, including literacy, and to develop a strong love of learning. The wider curriculum is promoted very effectively through a variety of clubs and activities. Learning is also reinforced effectively through a programme of trips and visits during the year, which pupils enjoy very much.
- Care is taken to ensure that the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff are not compromised. All safeguarding requirements meet statutory requirements. Similarly, care is given to ensuring the financial stability of the school and its ability to look to the future with confidence. This is also supported by the school's self-evaluation, so that it knows itself well. From this it can look to plan for the future, identifying areas for development.
- Leadership and management are not yet outstanding because the monitoring of classroom practice lacks a clear focus that supports the effective management of staff performance. This results in a lack of clarity for how teachers might improve their practice, be set challenging performance targets and benefit from targeted professional development opportunities.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website:
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School details

Unique reference number	123615
Inspection number	443470
DfE registration number	893/6013

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	Independent day school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	166
Number of part time pupils	16
Proprietor	Helen Clarke
Headteacher	Helen Clarke
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2009
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,050
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