

Herington House School

1 Mount Avenue, Hutton CM13 2NS

Inspection dates	14–16 June 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school's senior leaders have created a positive learning ethos where pupils work hard and achieve well. This is an improving school.
- Teaching is effective because it enables pupils to achieve well as they progress through the school.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and make effective use of the wide range of resources available in the school.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well. They are very courteous towards each other and their teachers.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, and is enhanced by a wide range of clubs and exciting activities.
- Fundamental British values are at the very heart of what the school stands for. Pupils have a very good understanding of what it means to be a responsible member of British society.
- Pupils are rightly proud of the school and feel safe. Bullying is extremely rare.
- Pupils' attendance is in line with the national average.
- The early years provision is good and children make good progress. Assessment of children's progress is regular, and partnerships with parents are strong.
- Leaders have ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The school's systems for assessing pupils' progress have not had sufficient impact in securing outstanding progress.
- Pupils' outcomes in mathematics have not matched those in reading and writing over time.
- Communication with some parents has been flawed and has led to misconceptions about some aspects of behaviour.
- Some teachers have focused too much on what pupils are doing rather than what they are learning. Their written guidance to pupils, particularly those who are most able, does not always help them improve their work.
- Leaders do not routinely evaluate and review the impact of their work with sufficient rigour in order to easily demonstrate improvement.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and pupils' outcomes, outstanding by:
 - ensuring that the quality of teaching of mathematics secures rapid progress
 - making sure that all teachers focus on what pupils are expected to learn rather than what they are expected to do
 - strengthening systems for assessing pupils' progress in Years 1 to 6 so that progress is monitored more explicitly
 - ensuring that all teachers are clear about what good progress looks like.

- Make leadership outstanding by:
 - robustly evaluating and reviewing the aspects of the school's provision that leaders routinely monitor so that trends can be identified and evidence of improvement easily provided
 - establishing systems to ensure that all the independent school standards are being met consistently well
 - improving methods of communication to parents in order to tackle the misconceptions of those who have negative views about some aspects of the school's provision
 - ensuring that all teachers implement the school's marking policy consistently so that all pupils, particularly the most able, know how to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders have established a clear vision for improving this school which is known and shared by teachers and pupils alike. They set high standards and expect all members of the school to promote them. Staff morale is high, as evidenced through their responses to the Ofsted questionnaire.
- The school's ethos is one where all pupils are valued equally and which is based on traditional values. The small size of the school has its advantages. Inspectors heard pupils of all ages talking about the 'family feel' leaders have created. Pupils value this feeling because it makes them feel safe and secure.
- Teaching is managed well. A range of monitoring activities helps the school's senior leaders to identify which aspects of teaching are effective and which are not. The school's senior leaders gather evidence from a wide variety of sources to form their judgements of the quality of teaching, which includes observations of teachers in the classroom, scrutiny of achievement information, and looking at pupils' books.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. They provide helpful guidance as to what pupils have done well. While most follow the school's policy to explain to pupils how they can improve their work, some teachers' comments are not explicit enough in telling pupils what they actually have to do to make better progress. This applies particularly to the school's most able pupils.
- Staff training is of good quality and teachers have access to effective training provided within the school as well as through external organisations. Those who attend training outside the school are expected to pass on important learning points to their colleagues so that they remain up to date with effective strategies.
- Teachers' performance is managed well, and targets set for teachers at the start of the year relate to findings from the previous year. Most classroom teachers have a subject responsibility due to the small size of the school, and they take this role seriously. The very few teachers whose teaching is not yet consistently good are well supported to improve their practice.
- The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced, and has secured good outcomes over time. Due consideration is given to the choice of subjects on offer. For example, leaders have made the strategic decision to replace German as the second foreign language with Spanish because pupils in Years 5 and 6 take part in an activities week in Menorca, and this will also enable them to put their Spanish speaking skills to the test.
- Pupils take advantage of an extensive range of extra-curricular activities arranged by the school. These comprise musical events, including two major performances a year, and drama activities, as well as sporting activities. Pupils appreciate these activities and the time their teachers dedicate to making them successful.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. This is a strong aspect of the school's provision. Colourful and lively displays around the school celebrate a range of cultures and festivals, school excursions and events. All subject areas promote fundamental British values whenever they can, and pupils have a good understanding of the difference between right and wrong.
- Although inspectors did not concur with senior leaders' views of the school's overall effectiveness, the school has many strengths of which it can be proud. The school's self-evaluation summary document ties in closely with its improvement planning processes, and the priorities for improvement are relevant. School leaders acknowledge the need to sharpen their analysis of the outcomes of their monitoring and to link these more closely to the independent school standards. Inspectors found some minor flaws in the school's compliance with the independent school standards, but these were rectified before inspectors left the school.
- A few parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, raised concerns about communication between them and the school. A few parents also believe that behaviour in the school could be improved. Inspectors found this not to be the case, but note that this is their perception. This perception is also indicative of some weaknesses in the way leaders communicate with parents.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The proprietor has chosen not have a governing body. Instead, the headteacher, deputy headteacher and two senior teachers together form a body which holds the school and each other to account.
 - This group works well together to ensure that the school is run smoothly. Policies are reviewed regularly and adequate systems are in place to monitor the work of the school.

- Teachers’ performance is monitored regularly, and the headteacher links any rises in teachers’ pay to their effectiveness in the classroom.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school has a suitable safeguarding policy published on its website. Some minor errors relating to the administration of safeguarding were put right before inspectors left the school. Staff in the school are aware of their role in keeping children safe. All staff have received relevant and up-to-date training in the safeguarding of children. Procedures are clear, and staff know what to do if they have any concerns relating to a child’s well-being.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to engage pupils’ interest. Pupils are keen to learn and to make good progress. Relationships between teachers and pupils are positive.
- Teachers are adept at developing key skills which enable pupils to achieve well across a wide range of subjects. For example, in a Year 5 English lesson, pupils learned the difference between reading texts for factual information and for inference. They viewed an engaging film clip about mountaineering in the Himalayas and then recalled factual information as well as details that were inferred. They were then able to apply the skills they had developed to three different sets of questions. Because the questions had been carefully matched to their abilities, all pupils made good progress in the lesson.
- Teachers develop pupils’ reading skills well. Inspectors observed pupils across all year groups reading aloud what they had written in their books, or reading lesson objectives from the board. This showed clear development in pupils’ confidence and broadening of their range of vocabulary.
- Teachers check for pupils’ understanding of what they are learning using a range of strategies including good use of questioning, sharing their answers with a talking partner and self- and peer-assessment. All these enable pupils to test out what they have learned and to deepen their understanding and knowledge.
- Additional adults in the classroom play an active part in helping pupils to make good progress. They help pupils to understand the work rather than do it for them.
- While there is no doubt that pupils make good progress in this school, the school’s systems for monitoring progress are not used skilfully enough by all teachers and senior leaders to enable them to know what good progress actually looks like. Some teachers focus too much on what pupils are expected to do rather than what they are expected to learn.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils told inspectors they feel safe when in school.
- Pupils are taught very well about how to stay safe when using the internet, and the school has robust systems in place to ensure that they can only gain access to websites which will not compromise their safety or well-being.
- Bullying in the school is an extremely rare occurrence. Nevertheless, pupils are taught very well about the different forms of bullying and know what to do should it occur. They told inspectors that they are confident that any incidents of bullying would be dealt with swiftly and appropriately.
- Pupils are provided with a wide range of roles and responsibilities to develop their confidence and build up their self-esteem. Inspectors observed pupils ringing the school bell to indicate the start and end of lunch, singing ‘A nightingale sang in Berkeley Square’, playing the piano as pupils entered for their assembly and serving healthy salads to their peers during lunchtime.
- Pupils are very well informed about fundamental British values. They have an excellent understanding of democracy and the rule of the law. Members of the school council in their discussions with inspectors explained how they were democratically elected and how they take their leadership roles seriously. They were aware of the imminent referendum and presented well-considered and balanced arguments to inspectors as to why the United Kingdom should or should not remain a member of the European Union.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They move around the small school site in an orderly way and have excellent manners, showing respect and courtesy to their classmates and their teachers. Indeed, good manners are instilled from a very early age. Inspectors observed children in the early years arriving at school and shaking hands with their teachers. This practice continues as pupils move up the school.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is exemplary. They listen attentively to their teachers and their classmates. Inspectors observed teachers managing behaviour well using a good range of strategies to ensure that attitudes remained positive.
- Pupils take great pride in wearing their distinctive school uniform. They arrive at their lessons well equipped and ready for work, and present their work neatly.
- There have been no permanent or fixed-term exclusions for a number of years and the school does not need to operate any form of internal isolation. A few parents who responded to Parent View were of the opinion that some behaviour in the school was poor and incorrectly dealt with by the school's leaders. Inspection evidence does not support this perception, expressed by some parents, of pupils' behaviour.
- Pupils' attendance is in line with the national average. Leaders presented convincing case studies for the few pupils whose attendance has given the school cause for concern, and provided details of how they are attempting to tackle this.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well at Herington House School. This is clearly linked to the good quality of teaching they receive and their positive attitudes towards their learning. Inspectors validated this view from their scrutiny of pupils' books across a range of subjects.
- Most pupils in the school are at or above the expected standard for their age. Pupils have achieved well over time in English, reading and spelling. Pupils achieved less well in mathematics in 2015, but this improved in 2016.
- The school's leaders track pupils' attainment and progress regularly and are able to produce documents which place pupils in rank order for attainment. While some of the school's most able pupils achieve well, other most able pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable, and it is not always clear how the school identifies when a pupil is deemed to be 'most able'. Teachers' written guidance for most-able pupils' work is not consistently helpful in telling them how they can improve.
- The school identifies its pupils who have special educational needs or disability as those who require 'reinforcement'. Systems for identifying these pupils are robust, and information on an individual pupil's needs is shared regularly so that teachers are able to use appropriate strategies in the classroom. As a result, these pupils make good progress and achieve well from their different starting points.
- Pupils read well and talk with great enthusiasm about the wide range of books they read. Every classroom has a good supply of reading materials which pupils are encouraged to use.
- Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education. Around 60% of pupils achieve places at selective schools, and all are offered places at independent schools with a number being awarded an academic or a music scholarship.

Early years provision

is good

- The early years provision is good overall and it continues to improve. The school meets the statutory standards for the early years. Safeguarding is effective.
- Children enter the early years provision with skills that are typical for their age. They make good progress during their time in the early years, and the proportion who reach a good level of development by the end of Reception Year is slightly above the national average. This is due to the quality of the curriculum which meets children's needs well. Assessment procedures are stronger in the early years than in other parts of the school, as they are reliant on day-to-day teaching rather than just on summative tests.
- Teaching is effective, particularly the teaching of phonics, and secures good outcomes. The restricted space in the school means that some aspects of the provision, particularly the outdoor space, do not contribute as well to learning, because equipment has to be stored away and is not constantly available. Reading has a strong focus, and all children read to an adult every day. Homework has a high priority and communications with parents through informal means and via reading records are strong. This

partnership with parents has clearly had a positive impact.

- The early years provision has been prioritised by the school this year. Early years staff have responded well to internal and external support which has included guidance from a school mentor, attending local training, moderation of children's work, and a highly evaluative visit from a local authority adviser. This has helped to sharpen the school's evaluation of this provision and to identify what needs to improve and how this can be achieved. Hence, leadership of the early years is effective.
- Children behave well and are well looked after. The small size of the school contributes to this, and children are known very well as individuals and feel part of the 'family'. The youngest children maintain high levels of concentration and engagement in their learning. On the few times when they need reminding about expectations, they respond quickly.

School details

Unique reference number	115418
Inspection number	10008564
DfE registration number	881/6024

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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	Preparatory
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	128
Proprietor	Herington House School Ltd
Headteacher	Robert Dudley-Cooke
Annual fees (day pupils)	£9,000–£10,860
Telephone number	01277 211595
Website	www.heringtonhouseschool.co.uk
Email address	secretary@heringtonhouseschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 January 2010

Information about this school

- Herington House School is an independent preparatory day school for pupils aged three to 11. It is located in a quiet residential area of Shenfield.
- The school was founded in 1936 and has been run by the same family since 1972.
- The school was last inspected in January 2010 when it was judged to be good. One emergency inspection was conducted in November 2014 following a complaint about behaviour in the early years classes. The inspection found that all independent school standards were being met.
- Pupils come from a range of diverse cultural backgrounds, but most are of a White British heritage.
- A small proportion of pupils have special educational needs or disability. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not have any disadvantaged pupils.
- The school does not make use of any alternative off-site provision.
- The school is a limited company. There is no board of trustees or governing body. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and two senior teachers fulfil the governance role.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted with one day's notice.
- Inspectors observed learning in every class, sometimes accompanied by senior leaders. They also looked at a range of pupils' books.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders and two groups of pupils. Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors scrutinised school improvement documents, policies, information on pupils' progress, records of the quality of teaching, and information on pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered 33 responses to Parent View and 23 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

John Daniell, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Anne Pepper

Ofsted Inspector

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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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