

The White House School

Heath Road, Whitchurch, Shropshire SY13 2AA

Inspection dates

16–18 May 2017

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

- Pupils gain a love of learning and make good progress. Many take and pass entrance examinations for selective secondary schools.
- The most able pupils do exceptionally well. They reach high standards that are well above those expected for their age.
- Pupils' conduct and attitudes to learning are exemplary. In class, they are attentive, responsive and keen to learn. In all situations, they are thoughtful and responsible, and can be trusted to do their best. Pupils develop high levels of confidence and resilience.
- Teaching across the school is good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and set high standards for pupils' behaviour and learning.
- The headteacher, who is also the proprietor, is committed to providing pupils with a well-rounded education. Under her leadership, academic standards have been maintained, worthy values are promoted and the independent school standards are met.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school and value its work.
- Pupils benefit from a broad and rich curriculum that is often enhanced by trips or special events. Music, drama, art and performance are notable strengths. Achievement in these subjects is exceptional.
- Staff morale and teamwork are good, although arrangements for evaluating teachers' work and spotting training needs could be sharpened up.
- Provision in the early years is effective. Children develop good learning habits that help them as they move up through the school. Early reading skills are taught very well.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive appropriate support. However, staff training and checks on the impact of extra support for these pupils do not happen on a regular cycle.
- Pupils are kept safe at school. Adults act with kind authority and pupils willingly help one another. Any safety or welfare concerns are responded to promptly.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the aspirational culture at the school are significant strengths.

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?

- Improve systems for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching in order to share best practice and identify training needs by making sure:
 - leaders hold regular appraisal meetings with staff
 - staff have opportunities to attend relevant training courses when required
 - staff are able to share their effective practice with other schools and learn from practice elsewhere
 - leaders take a more regular and evaluative approach for checking on the impact of additional support provided to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Effective leadership has ensured that all the independent school standards continue to be met.
- The headteacher provides good leadership and does a lot. In addition to her headship responsibilities, she coordinates several subjects, has a regular teaching commitment and knows each pupil very well. Through her infectious enthusiasm and jolly conversational manner, she keeps the school operating effectively and trusts her capable staff to do their jobs well.
- Subject specialist teachers keep a tight rein on their subjects. By working alongside one another, they have implemented a broad curriculum that promotes high standards and a love of learning. The breadth and quality of the curriculum are strengths of the school, as they give pupils the chance to achieve in wide spread of subjects. In art, drama and music, pupils have many chances to practise, showcase and perform. Pupils regularly excel in these subjects.
- A range of extra-curricular activities serve to build upon pupils' classroom achievements in different subjects. For instance, pupils have performed a nativity play in Spanish and a version of Cinderella in French. There is a weekly Latin club that draws on classical texts. These aspects, which make the most of teachers' expertise and extend pupils' learning, are significant strengths.
- Through the day-to-day culture of good manners, duty and courtesy that operates in the school, pupils acquire an excellent understanding of right and wrong and a respect for hard work and other people. They are taught to see the link between effort and success and the value of perseverance and a positive outlook. This ethos, coupled with the rich curriculum on offer, ensure that pupils are well prepared for learning and life beyond The White House School.
- The school's current arrangements for staff appraisal are rather informal. This means that staff do not receive fully informed feedback about their work and miss out on some training opportunities. The headteacher is aware of this and is looking into ways to improve this situation.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View and those who spoke with inspectors expressed very positive comments about the school. Parents particularly value the excellent level of care, the cheerful, positive staff, and the emphasis on achievement and enjoyment across the whole curriculum.

Governance

- There is no governing body. The proprietor, who is also the headteacher, sets the vision for the school and oversees strategic planning. Her committed leadership has given the school a clear sense of identity that promotes worthy values and enables pupils to experience success in a broad range of subjects.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's policy documents are extensive and fully up to date with current government guidance. These documents are available on the school's website.
- Staff training, which has been limited in curriculum matters, has been frequent and effective in respect of safeguarding. Staff are well informed about the risks pupils may face and are alert to any warning signs that a pupil may be having problems. Pupils, too, understand the need to tell an adult if something is worrying them. They are taught how to manage everyday situations, such as using computers and mobile phones or crossing the road. Pupils learn to be aware of the importance of self-respect and their responsibilities towards others.
- All the proper checks are carried out on staff and visitors. Fire drills are frequent and arrangements for first aid and for managing medicines in school work as they should.
- Staff understand their duty of care and, when there has been a need to respond to a concern, all the correct procedures have been followed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- In all classes and subjects, teaching is effective. Teachers know their pupils well and manage them with calm authority. In turn, pupils are attentive, responsive and keen to learn. All do their best.
- English and mathematics are taught by the year group class teachers. Other subjects, such as history, geography, music, physical education, drama, art and foreign languages are taught by subject specialist teachers who move from class to class. Teacher subject knowledge is good and pupils are taught knowledge and skills in logical progression as they move up through the school. Teachers make regular assessments of pupils' progress and understanding and use this information to plan next steps in learning, although this is done more efficiently for the middle ability and most able pupils than for those who find aspects of learning difficult.
- The quality of teaching in the creative subjects of art, music and drama is excellent. In these subjects, pupils reach high standards as a result of imaginative and ambitious teaching. During this inspection, for example, the quality of singing from the youngest children during an informal concert for parents and the accomplished and uplifting performance by the school choir during a lunchtime practice exemplified this perfectly. Furthermore, the range and quality of artwork on display is superb.
- It is also worth noting that pupils' knowledge and skills learned in one subject area are frequently called upon by teaching in other subject areas. During this inspection, for instance, teaching in a mathematics session about pie charts not only covered a range of mathematical skills, such as measurement, reasoning and proportion, but also drew upon pupils' knowledge of history and geography. This ability to make links between different areas of learning, fuelled by pupils' and teachers' good general knowledge, is a great feature of the school curriculum and keeps pupils alert and motivated.
- Homework, too, plays its part. Expectations are clear: pupils know exactly what is required and make sure they complete tasks to a good standard and on time. This forges good

habits and supports classroom learning.

- While there is no doubting the strong base of subject expertise and the ambition and effectiveness of teaching, staff training could be improved. In recent times, teachers and teaching assistants have kept up to date with statutory training about health and safety matters, but the cycle of staff appraisal and curriculum training has slipped. Consequently, staff miss out on opportunities to share good practice with other schools and to hone their teaching skills further.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The school's attention to these aspects is second to none. From the very start, pupils are encouraged to take responsibility, show respect for others and rise to challenges. Staff provide plenty of firm guidance and warm encouragement that build pupils' confidence and fuels their aspirations. Indeed, in the school entrance hall, a where-are-they-now display of past pupils serves to highlight the school's sense of pride in their pupils, past and present, and inspires current pupils to do their best.
- Pupils' respectful confidence, in particular, stands out as a notable feature. All Year 6 pupils have to act as captains for different aspects of the school's work, such as science captain or playground captain. In these roles, they have to make sure routines run smoothly and sort out any problems that might arise. House captains have to give pep talks to their house teams and pupils of all ages regularly give presentations in class or take part in public performances. All of this helps to equip pupils with the confidence and skills to voice their opinions, share their thoughts and contribute to school life in positive ways. In short, they gain a love of learning, a sense of occasion and a respect for duty.
- Pupils report that bullying is very rare, although staff teach them how to spot it should it occur. They understand that it is unacceptable and everyone is responsible for making sure it does not happen. The school has put thoughtful systems in place that allow pupils to share concerns with adults, should they need to. Pupils say they trust other pupils and the adults in school to help them and that they feel safe at school.
- Pupils learn about online safety and the dangers of prejudice. The morning and afternoon arrangements, when parents drive on to the school playground to bring or collect their children, serve as a daily lesson in road safety and the importance of rules and cooperation.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are smart, punctual and respectful. They understand and follow the school's rules and learning is rarely, if ever, disturbed by poor behaviour. In lessons, when moving around the school, at lunch, at play, and during school clubs, pupils' conduct is exemplary.
- Pupils understand the value of good manners. They open doors for others, stand aside to let others pass, offer polite, cheery greetings to visitors and say please and thank you

without any prompting.

- Attendance rates are high and unnecessary absence is rare. Pupils take great pride in their work and value the school's incentives and rewards. House points are prized and there is a healthy level of competition that motivates and recognises excellence but does not allow anyone to feel left out.
- Pupils' excellent behaviour is a huge benefit to them in the classroom. In all situations, they are attentive, do what is asked of them and can exercise initiative when required. Consequently, they make the most of lessons and the teaching they receive.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress at this school. They are highly motivated and respond well to the good teaching provided. By the time pupils reach the top end of key stage 2, they are well prepared for their next schools. In the current Year 6, for instance, the majority of pupils have taken and passed entrance examinations for selective secondary schools. This is typical.
- Work in pupils' books, work being tackled in class and the school's assessment information all show that most pupils are working at a standard above that typically expected for their age. This is the case in mathematics, reading, writing, spelling and other curriculum areas. Pupils' achievement in music, art and drama is exceptional. In these subjects, pupils excel because of excellent teaching.
- The most able pupils get a very good deal at this school. Since the previous inspection, the level of challenge for the brightest pupils has increased and the results are plain to see. The quality of writing and the level of complex mathematics being tackled by the most able pupils, especially in Years 5 and 6, are most impressive. Furthermore, their ability to apply their literacy and numeracy skills across a broad range of subjects is often excellent.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are given extra support that, for most of the time, meets their needs. For example, pupils are taken out of class for extra tuition or receive some additional adult help in class. Inspectors' checks on school records found that these pupils make good progress overall. However, school leaders could do more to evaluate the impact of support and then refine it when necessary. Currently, some pupils carry on with programmes of work when they are ready for something different. This is not commonplace, but it does happen.
- Pupils receive a well-rounded education at this school and acquire skills and attitudes that will help them, both now and in the future.

Early years provision

Good

- The majority of children start school in the Kindergarten or Reception class with knowledge and skills in line with those typical for their age. Adults treat them with firm kindness and make sure expectations are sensible and routines are clearly understood. Consequently, children settle in quickly and enjoy their early learning. They make good progress and the vast majority reach a good level of development before they start in Year 1. In many cases, children are more than ready for key stage 1 learning when they move up from the early years. The school's approach to the teaching of phonics and early

reading is particularly effective.

- This good progress is the result of good teaching informed by accurate assessment overseen by effective leadership. Having said this, assessment information in the children's learning journals is used more to showcase the quantity and quality of work at the end of a term than as an ongoing record to inform teachers' day-to-day planning. Further staff training, including more opportunities to meet with staff from other early years settings, is planned in order to refine practice in this aspect.
- As in the rest of the school, children's behaviour is excellent. They take turns, are cooperative, manage their feelings well and are able to articulate their ideas with an impressive clarity for their young age.
- All the independent school standards that relate to early years provision are met. Children's welfare and safety are given a high priority. The available space is put to good use and children are supervised appropriately at all times. Poor behaviour is rare and children show kind interest in one another. They feel safe and secure at school.
- Frequent communication with parents assists children's smooth start to school. It also ensures that parents are kept informed about their children's progress, well-being and school life.

School details

Unique reference number	123615
DfE registration number	893/6013
Inspection number	10033562

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	Other independent school
School category	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	98
Number of part-time pupils	8
Proprietor	Mrs Helen Clarke
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Clarke
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,475
Telephone number	01948 662730
Website	www.whitehouseshropshire.co.uk
Email address	whitehouseschool@btconnect.com
Date of previous inspection	2–4 July 2014

Information about this school

- The White House School is an independent day school for pupils between the ages of three and 11 years. The headteacher is also the proprietor, as was the case at the time of the previous inspection in July 2014.
- 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 go to local comprehensive schools.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities at the school is below the national average for primary schools.
- The school offers before- and after-school childcare, as well as numerous clubs during lunchtimes and after school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups and met with the headteacher, staff and groups of pupils. The inspectors also examined pupils' work in books, and considered test and assessment information and heard some pupils read.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour, and the school's procedures, at the beginning and end of the school day, at lunchtimes and breaktimes, during clubs and when pupils were moving about the school site and performing in a concert.
- By the end of the inspection, there were 26 recent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and 17 free-text comments. The inspectors noted these and also spoke with parents during the inspection.
- A number of school documents were examined. These included information about pupils' achievement, numerous policy statements, and records relating to special educational needs, staff performance management, premises, staff appointment processes, training, behaviour, admissions, attendance, safety and safeguarding. The school's website was also checked.

Inspection team

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