

St Christopher's The Hall School

49 Bromley Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 5PA

Inspection dates

6–8 February 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
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

- Leadership capacity is strong. Senior and middle leaders have an accurate understanding of the school. Senior leaders ensure that the school meets the independent school standards.
- The school's rich curriculum successfully develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Strong teaching enables pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills highly.
- Pupils enhance their English knowledge and understanding through rich opportunities in their humanities subjects.
- Strong teaching develops pupils' expressive, physical and musical development well. Pupils achieve very well in these areas.
- Teaching enables pupils to develop strong skills in their reading and writing. However, in mathematics, the most able pupils do not develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills as well as they could.
- Personal development and welfare are outstanding. Children have a very strong understanding of keeping themselves safe and healthy. They have a well-developed understanding of respecting differences and behave well.
- Pupils progress well in the early years and are well prepared for the next stage of their education in Year 1.
- Leaders ensure that they rigorously oversee pupils' attendance and punctuality, which are above the national average.
- Leaders, including middle leaders, have implemented a number of strategies to improve the school further. However, they do not precisely follow up on specific actions to ensure that these are fully embedded.
- Pupils make good progress across all subjects. However, some of the lowest-attaining pupils do not typically receive work that matches their abilities.

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 the quality of leadership and management so that leaders, including middle leaders, precisely monitor and evaluate the implementation of specific actions.
- Develop the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - providing lower-ability pupils with work that is more closely matched to their needs
 - ensuring that pupils, particularly the most able pupils, are challenged with tasks that stretch their reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have developed a collaborative and nurturing environment. They set high standards and a culture of mutual respect is prevalent across the school. Leaders are ambitious in supporting pupils' transition to the secondary schools of their choice.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school. Since the previous inspection, the senior and middle leadership team has expanded to take greater ownership of the school's further development. As a result, the school has strengthened its leadership capacity. Leaders review pupils' assessment information regularly.
- Pupils achieve well in the school because of an embedded curriculum. There is a sharp emphasis on the development of reading, writing and mathematical skills and knowledge, and pupils enjoy a wide range of other subjects. Leaders encourage pupils to excel in the wider curriculum. Pupils enjoy their humanities lessons and demonstrate a strong knowledge of history and geography. Specialist teachers in music, drama and physical education (PE) provide pupils with rich opportunities to thrive.
- The school develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding very well. Pupils gain a deep understanding of British values and adults develop pupils' understanding through insightful discussions. For example, in assemblies, pupils learn about the historical significance of the Suffragettes and their importance to gender equality. Pupils show tolerance and empathy when they donate to local and international charities. A broad curriculum enables pupils to develop a strong understanding and respect for people of all faiths and none.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are identified adequately. Leaders ensure that external specialists are involved effectively and additional support is given. As a result, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities typically make secure progress.
- Leaders, including middle leaders, demonstrate a good understanding of how to further improve the school. Staff receive good support for their professional development and leaders drop in to lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. However, leaders' checks that certain initiatives are fully embedded are not as precise as they could be. As a result, the effectiveness of leadership between subjects is variable.
- The majority of parents and carers who completed the online questionnaire agree that the school ensures that their children are kept safe. Many parents shared the view that leaders' communication with parents was not as good as it could be. Leaders are aware of these views and have sought to improve how they communicate with parents.
- Leaders ensure that the school meets all of the independent school standards.

Governance

- Governors take an active role in the strategic oversight of the school. Governors have reflected on the values and aims of the school so that these are clearly defined. The governing body continues to oversee the implementation of new building projects, which enables pupils to thrive in a well-resourced environment.

- Governors have broadened their roles. They check on safeguarding-related matters and receive appropriate training in safer recruitment and the 'Prevent' duty.
- Governors now provide more challenge to senior leaders. For example, they meet with subject leaders to gain a deeper understanding of the school's curriculum. Governors have analysed trends in pupils' progress and questioned senior leaders about the progress made by different groups of pupils across the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and the school's safeguarding policy available on its website reflects the latest guidance.
- Leaders have a well-rounded understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. The designated safeguarding leads have recently completed their training with the local authority. Leaders have good relationships with external agencies and are confident in using them when appropriate.
- Staff have a good understanding of the school's policies and procedures. They receive regular training and demonstrate a strong insight into how to deal with potential concerns, should they occur. Staff have a positive culture of developing pupils' confidence so that pupils can keep themselves safe.
- Pupils feel safe and form strong working relationships with many adults. As a result, pupils feel very confident in being able to share any potential concerns with staff. Pupils who take part in sporting and drama activities in external academies are allocated mentors. These mentors act as a bridge between external providers, parents and the school to help pupils keep safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good and leads to good outcomes for pupils.
- Staff form strong working relationships with pupils. Teachers know pupils well and encourage them to take responsibility for their learning. Interactions between teachers and pupils are underpinned by mutual respect. Teachers encourage pupils to discuss their work and this enables pupils to make strong progress, particularly in their speaking and listening skills.
- The teaching of writing is a strength across the school. Teachers encourage pupils to write for a range of purposes. Pupils' writing is fluent, with strong use of increasingly sophisticated vocabulary which is often of a much higher standard than expected for their age. Teachers check pupils' work diligently and provide good guidance on how to improve their work, which pupils respond to well.
- Pupils enjoy science lessons, especially when they carry out experiments. Pupils sensibly use equipment and collaborate well with each other. For example, in Year 3, pupils learned which material was the best insulator and drew conclusions from their results, using good scientific vocabulary.
- Pupils benefit from being taught a wide range of subjects. Pupils make strong progress in

PE and they perform to a high standard in music lessons. Teachers encourage pupils' development of strong art skills. As a result, pupils share their knowledge and understanding of a range of artists enthusiastically.

- Teachers develop pupils' knowledge and understanding through cross-curricular work. For example, in Year 6, pupils had opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of waterfalls in geography by designing bar charts, which also developed their mathematical skills. In art lessons, pupils make use of their history topics to design ancient Egyptian death masks.
- The teaching of phonics is strong and pupils benefit from well-thought-out resources to help them practise new rules. Good questioning from teachers enables pupils to gain insightful understanding of a range of rich and challenging texts. Pupils typically read with confidence and fluency and have a well-developed understanding of their favourite authors.
- In mathematics, teachers ensure that pupils develop strong calculation skills. Consequently, pupils recall known number facts rapidly and productively carry out arithmetical tasks. Pupils make good progress in acquiring new mathematical methods, for example when calculating with fractions. However, teachers do not provide pupils, particularly the most able pupils, with opportunities to further develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills. As a result, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers plan lessons to interest and engage pupils. Provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities enables them to make typically good progress. However, sometimes the work for lower-ability pupils does not meet their needs and is too difficult. Consequently, the progress these pupils make is not as strong as it could be.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Rich curriculum opportunities enable pupils to develop their understanding of healthy lifestyles. For example, in a Year 6 science lesson, pupils learned about food labelling and responded with great enthusiasm to how they could follow a more balanced diet. Chefs and kitchen staff work with pupils in Year 3 to broaden pupils' experiences of textures and tastes in a variety of foods. These opportunities are used to reinforce positive messages about nutrition and good manners while ordering food.
- Pupils benefit from many extra-curricular clubs where they can experience sessions in dance, drama, art and sports. Leaders ensure that they listen to views of the 'pupil voice' group for additional clubs. Pupils' achievements are celebrated in a respectful manner during assemblies.
- There is a strong understanding of keeping safe among pupils. They learn about the potential harm of grooming in a sensitive way, and are empowered to 'speak up' should they need to. Pupils have a strong understanding of keeping safe online. They speak articulately about the dangers of online bullying and the potential dangers of social media.

- Leaders ensure that pupils who excel and have opportunities to learn in sports academies and in the West End are assigned mentors from among the school's staff. They work with pupils and ensure that they feel safe. For example, a sports mentor discussed with pupils the potential risks associated with pressures in football academies. They collaborate with teachers to make sure that pupils progress well in their academic subjects.
- Pupils are proud of their school and value the opportunities they receive. For example, pupils speak positively about being given responsibilities to work in the library and helping younger pupils with their lunch. Pupils told inspectors that opportunities to learn with specialist music and drama teachers developed their confidence in performing and collaborating with their peers.
- Pupils feel safe at school and trust the adults who work with them. Pupils said that bullying was extremely rare and any incidents where pupils felt unhappy are tackled effectively by teachers.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes and demonstrate a caring nature towards each other. They enjoy the school's reward system of 'gold and silver stars'. During playtimes, pupils play sensibly and adults are vigilant. Adults consistently apply the school's behaviour policy and incidents of serious misbehaviour are extremely rare.
- Pupils are polite to adults and work together well in class. Pupils typically move around the school in an orderly manner and the older pupils are keen to help their younger peers. Occasionally, pupils lose concentration when they have mastered a task and are waiting to move on in their learning.
- Attendance is above the national average and is rigorously checked by leaders.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress across the school. Most pupils enter the lower school with skills above those expected for their age. They continue to attain above the national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave the preparatory school.
- Pupils are doing particularly well in their writing and benefit from opportunities to develop their writing skills in the wider curriculum. In reading, pupils develop strong inference skills through reading challenging texts and class discussions. For example, in Year 4, pupils made strong progress in understanding a character's feelings while reading 'The Wreck of the Zanzibar'.
- In mathematics, pupils make strong progress, particularly in acquiring well-developed calculation strategies. The most able pupils do not make the progress they are capable of because their reasoning and problem-solving skills are not as developed as they could be.
- At the end of Year 6, a large proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities attain at least in line with national expectations. However, a minority of lower-ability pupils do not make strong progress and achieve below national averages in reading, writing and

mathematics.

- By the end of Year 6, a large proportion of pupils are able to play musical instruments to a good standard and sit nationally recognised exams. Pupils make strong progress in their PE lessons with specialist teachers who set high standards. For example, the school's netball team excels in local competitions.
- Good teaching of phonics has ensured that the vast majority of pupils have phonics skills at least in line with the national standards.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education. They are highly articulate and develop the necessary skills and attitudes to equip them for later life.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years provision is good. This is underpinned by strong leadership. The kindergarten and early years leads liaise effectively to share information about children between the two stages. This enables leaders to have a good understanding of individual children and ensure that transition arrangements are smooth.
- The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is well above the national average. Children make good progress from their high starting points and are well prepared for their education in Year 1.
- The early years and kindergarten provide children with a safe and nurturing environment. Children have well-developed routines and form positive relationships with adults. Many children are able to dress themselves and wash their hands independently in the kindergarten. Adults maintain vigilance and only support children when they need to. This develops children's resilience and independence.
- Adults check children's understanding with good questioning and regular assessment opportunities. Children's journals demonstrate good progress across all areas of learning. Children learn about a range of festivals, including Hanukkah.
- Children develop a good understanding of early mark-making. Many pupils are encouraged to write basic sentences and demonstrate a good pencil grip. Teachers develop pupils' early phonics skills well. Pupils have regular opportunities to learn new sounds and use these in their writing. For example, children wrote a story about 'on the moon' using descriptive language.
- Children benefit from a rich environment and curriculum. For example, children excel in learning French and music from specialist teachers. They are enthusiastic and highly engaged in these lessons. This helps children in their social development and language skills.
- Children enjoy their creative art lessons. They articulately discuss the topic of flying as part of their topic on 'transport'. Teachers encourage children to make choices about texture and colour while making hot-air balloons.
- Children have well-developed early number skills. They take pride in correctly writing numbers and share strategies of how to find 'one more and one less' than a number. Teachers encourage children to develop their understanding of number by using coins and encouraging them to count in fives and twos.

- Leaders make good use of partnerships with the local authority and ensure that children's assessment is accurate. Parents are kept up to date about the progress of their children.
- Adults know children very well and check on their understanding, providing effective support when required. However, sometimes lower-ability children do not receive work that matches their ability. As a result, these children rely too heavily on adult support and occasionally keep their hands up waiting for help. This limits their progress and independence.

School details

Unique reference number	101687
DfE registration number	305/6010
Inspection number	10035783

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 school
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	310
Number of part-time pupils	20
Proprietor	St Christopher's The Hall School Ltd
Chair	Mrs Tracy Sell-Peters
Headteacher	Andrew Velasco
Annual fees (day pupils)	£9,165
Telephone number	020 8650 2200
Website	https://stchristophersthehall.org.uk/
Email address	secretary@stchristophersthehall.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	March 2014

Information about this school

- St Christopher's The Hall School is a co-educational independent preparatory day school that was founded in 1893. It is located in the residential area of Beckenham in Kent. The school was last inspected in 2014.
- The school has been extended and updated to provide more classrooms and specialist rooms for music, drama and art.
- The school is registered for 312 pupils aged two to 11 years. There are two classes in each year group from Upper Kindergarten to Year 6. From Reception, there is a maximum limit of 18 children per class.

- The majority of pupils speak English as a first language. There are currently no pupils with an education, health and care plan. The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well below the national average.
- The current headteacher has been in post since 2000 and teaches part-time. The school has charity status and the board of directors acts as the governing body.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and members of staff to evaluate the impact of their work.
- Inspectors observed learning in all year groups, some of which were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. Work in pupils' journals and books was reviewed during visits to lessons.
- A range of documentation was considered, including assessment information and safeguarding and attendance records.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and talked to pupils informally throughout the inspection.
- Pupils took an inspector on a tour of the school and shared their views.
- Inspectors took account of the 113 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and of information gathered from discussions with parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Noeman Anwar, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Teresa Davies

Ofsted Inspector

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