

Herington House School

Mount Avenue, Hutton Mount, Brentwood, Essex CM13 2NS

Inspection dates

11–13 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
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 school that requires improvement

- The proprietor has not ensured that all the independent school standards are met consistently. Some standards were not met at the start of this inspection.
- The school's single central record of pre-appointment checks did not meet requirements at the start of the inspection.
- Leaders do not have an accurate view of the school. Self-evaluation is too generous.
- School improvement planning is not robust. It does not focus well enough on key priorities.
- There are some inconsistencies in teaching. Where teaching is weaker, a small amount of low-level disruption occurs because expectations are not high enough and behaviour is not managed effectively.
- Phonics is not taught well enough for pupils to make substantial gains in their phonic skills and knowledge.

The school has the following strengths

- The school is a happy place that pupils enjoy coming to. Most parents and carers would recommend the school to others.
- Teachers know pupils well. They use assessment effectively to plan work that meets pupils' needs.
- Pupils behave well. They follow the school's rules and treat adults, and each other, with good manners and respect.
- Safeguarding is effective and pupils feel safe at school. The single central record, edited during the inspection, now meets legal requirements.
- Pupils make good progress from their individual starting points in English, mathematics and a range of other subjects.
- The early years environment has been improved. Children get off to a good start in the early years classes.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by ensuring that:
 - all of the independent school standards are met consistently
 - leaders recalibrate their view of the school so that self-evaluation is analytical and accurate, and weaknesses are noted quickly
 - improvement planning is well focused, with sufficient emphasis on monitoring and evaluation.
- Improve the quality of teaching, so that more pupils make substantial and sustained progress, by:
 - sharing the best teaching practice so that weaker teaching is raised to the same standard
 - ensuring that all staff have high expectations of pupils and manage their behaviour effectively
 - improving the quality and effectiveness of phonics teaching.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Senior leaders have not ensured that the independent school standards are met consistently. At the start of this inspection, a number of standards were not met. For example, the school's admissions register did not contain all the necessary information.
- The school's monitoring systems are not good enough because they do not identify weaknesses and lack of compliance. Senior leaders were unaware that some of the independent school standards were not met until these were pointed out by inspectors.
- Senior leaders have an overly generous view of the school. They think that it is better than it is. Leaders are not sufficiently self-critical in their evaluation of the school. This means that they have neither identified, nor tackled, areas for improvement well enough. The school's improvement plan lacks rigour and it is not clear how it will be monitored and evaluated.
- By the end of the inspection, all of the independent school standards were met, other than those to do with leadership and management. These remain unmet because leaders have not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met consistently.
- Senior leaders are dedicated to the school and its pupils. The same family has owned the school for many years and it has a good reputation in the local area. Leaders have ensured that the good quality of teaching, and good outcomes for pupils, have been maintained since the previous inspection. The school is a caring place with happy staff and pupils.
- The school's motto, 'there are others', is given a high profile. Pupils are taught to be thoughtful and to care for others. They take part in a range of fund-raising events for a variety of charities. For example, pupils are currently sponsoring Dexter and Ned, a pig and a donkey, at a nearby animal sanctuary.
- Pupils are prepared well for life in modern British society. They learn about democracy and the rule of law, as well as British traditions and history. They are taught that people should be judged on what they do, not on their personal characteristics or beliefs.
- Nine out of 10 parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that they would recommend the school to others. Many parents chose to leave written comments in support of the school. Typically, parents noted the school's 'family' feel and how happy their children are to attend the school.
- The school's curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced. Pupils learn about a range of subjects and topics. The curriculum is enriched with visits to places of interest, linked to pupils' learning in classrooms. For example, pupils visit the Imperial War Museum in Duxford to bring to life their work on the Second World War.
- Leaders have taken action to address the areas for improvement identified by the previous inspection. For example, actions such as introducing a text-messaging system have improved the way the school communicates with parents. Leaders have improved the way that mathematics is taught.

Governance

- The school does not have a governing body or an equivalent group that performs the same function. The proprietor is a family-owned limited company and the major shareholder is the school principal. There is insufficient separation of duties for governance to be effective in holding leaders to account and offering challenge and support in equal measure.
- Decisions are made by the principal and the senior leadership team with no accountability. There is no mechanism for an objective overview of the school's work or to check the accuracy of leaders' monitoring and the appropriateness of their decision making.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils feel safe at Herington House. They know that they can talk to any member of staff if they are worried about something, whether at home or at school. They know that staff will always help them when they need it.
- The school's designated safeguarding leads have a good understanding of their roles. They have ensured that staff are properly trained to spot the signs of possible abuse or neglect.
- Staff report child protection concerns in a timely fashion and leaders take appropriate action in response, when necessary. Records of child protection information are thorough and kept securely.
- At the start of the inspection, the school's single central record did not meet requirements. The issues identified were rectified by leaders so that the single central record was compliant by the end of the inspection.
- The school's safeguarding policy is published on its website. The policy meets current requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Teachers know their pupils well. As a result, classrooms are positive and welcoming places, where pupils feel happy and confident. Pupils like and appreciate their teachers. They told inspectors that their teachers explain things clearly and help them to understand their work.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have introduced a new approach to teaching mathematics. This is now being used in most year groups. Leaders have found that this has helped staff to be more confident in teaching mathematics and that pupils now enjoy mathematics more. Inspectors found that pupils are making good progress in mathematics. There is a clear sequence to their learning and they are given plenty of opportunities to practise their skills and to solve mathematical problems.
- Teaching assistants support pupils' learning well. They are clear about their roles and what is expected of them. Teaching assistants have strong knowledge about a range of subjects, enabling them to support pupils in lessons across the curriculum.

- Assessment procedures are firmly established. Teachers assess pupils' progress informally on an ongoing basis and formally at set intervals. For example, teachers ask pupils carefully chosen questions during lessons to test their understanding. Tests are used to check pupils' understanding of what they have been taught.
- Teachers use assessment information to help them to plan learning to meet pupils' individual needs. For example, they provide harder work for pupils when their assessments show that more challenge is needed.
- Music is taught well. A high proportion of the school's pupils learn to play a musical instrument, such as the piano, the saxophone or the electric guitar. Pupils are taught by specialist instrumental teachers. They follow a clear structure so that they steadily develop their knowledge and skills in playing their chosen instrument.
- Pupils are given plentiful opportunities to work together. This is helping them to develop their collaborative skills and their ability to work effectively with others. For example, pupils in Year 6 are currently working together on an 'enterprise' project, aiming to raise money from a small initial 'start-up' fund.
- A small amount of teaching is less strong. Where this is the case, pupils are less interested in and engaged with their learning. As a result, there is a small amount of low-level disruption, such as talking when the teacher is addressing the class. Pupils' effort and the presentation of their work is also less strong where teaching is weaker because expectations are not high enough.
- Phonics is not taught consistently well. Some staff do not have the knowledge and skills necessary to teach phonics effectively.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are polite and friendly. The school's high expectations about good manners are clear. Pupils routinely hold doors open and stand back to allow adults to pass through. They say 'please' and 'thank you', and are respectful to adults and other pupils alike.
- Most pupils show good attitudes to learning. They show an interest in the subjects that they learn about and they do their best. Most pupils take pride in their work, presenting their written work neatly and taking care with their handwriting.
- Pupils show interest in the fortunes of others and take an active part in their local community. They raise money enthusiastically for a range of charities. Pupils support others by, for example, singing to older adults in a local residential care home.
- Pupils gradually take on more roles and responsibilities as they move through the school. For example, the older pupils support the youngest children and help them to settle into school. Other pupils take on positions of responsibility, such as acting as members of the school council.
- Pupils feel safe at school. They say that there is no bullying and that staff would help them to sort things out quickly if it were to occur.
- Pupils are taught about a range of ways to keep themselves safe and healthy. For

example, they learn about road safety and take part in regular fire drills. Pupils throughout the school take part in 'Healthy Herington', regularly running laps of the school playground and recording the distance they have travelled.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils generally behave well, both in their classrooms and during less structured parts of the day. They know the school's rules and follow them closely. As a result, the school is a calm and orderly place.
- Pupils attend school regularly and on time. The school's most recent figures show that rates of attendance are above the national average. No groups of pupils are disadvantaged by low attendance.
- A small amount of restlessness and low-level disruption occurs when the quality of teaching is weaker. Although pupils generally behave well, behaviour is not impeccable.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The school does not participate in the national assessments at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2, nor in the phonics screening check in Year 1. As a result, it is not possible to compare the school's outcomes with other schools nationally in this way.
- The work in pupils' exercise books shows that they make strong progress from their starting points. By the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6, pupils attain in line with national curriculum expectations, with some pupils attaining above this.
- Pupils write for a range of purposes. The quality of pupils' written work is of a similar standard in other subjects as it is in their English books. Pupils generally present their work neatly and take care with their handwriting.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress from their starting points. They are provided with the support they need to achieve well. For example, a specialist teacher works with some pupils with SEND regularly and this helps them to make better progress.
- Outcomes are strong in creative subjects, such as music and drama. Pupils regularly reach grade 4 in playing their chosen instrument before they leave the school. Pupils develop strong public speaking skills and regularly achieve merits and distinctions in externally assessed examinations. Pupils take part in school productions of musicals, such as 'The Mikado', and other dramatic performances.
- Pupils typically enter Year 1 having attained a good level of development during their time in early years. Some pupils have higher starting points. Pupils' attainment by the time they leave the school shows that they make strong progress during their time at the school, but few pupils make substantial and sustained progress.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter school with starting points that are at least typical for their age. Some

children have knowledge and skills beyond what is typical. Children make good progress during their time in early years. Since the previous inspection, all children have attained a good level of development by the end of Reception Year.

- Where teaching is strongest, staff have good knowledge of early years practice and how young children learn. They plan learning activities that are well matched to children's needs. Children show great interest in the opportunities that they are given. They listen carefully to adults and follow instructions carefully.
- A range of actions have been taken to improve the early years environment since the previous inspection. The classrooms have been decorated and reorganised. Although the classrooms do not have direct access to an outdoor area, the early years has a designated area of the playground and staff use this as often as they can to provide children with opportunities to learn outdoors.
- The early years provision meets legal requirements for learning and safeguarding.
- As in the rest of the school, leaders do not have an accurate understanding of the quality of the early years provision. They consider the school's early years provision to be outstanding, despite clear evidence to the contrary.
- There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in the early years. Where teaching is weaker, children do not respond as well and some low-level disruptive behaviour occurs.

School details

Unique reference number	115418
DfE registration number	881/6024
Inspection number	10093908

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	124
Proprietor	Herington House School Limited
Chair	Robert Dudley-Cooke
Headteacher	Robert Dudley-Cooke
Annual fees (day pupils)	£10,290 to £11,940
Telephone number	01277 211595
Website	www.heringtonhouseschool.co.uk
Email address	principal@heringtonhouseschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–16 June 2016

Information about this school

- Herington House School is an independent day school for boys and girls aged three to 11 years.
- The proprietor is a family-owned, limited company. The school principal is the company's major shareholder. The school has been owned and run by the same family since 1972. It was founded in 1936.
- The school does not have a governing body.
- The school's previous standard inspections were in January 2010 and June 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching and learning over time. Inspectors observed parts of lessons, some jointly with school leaders.
- Inspectors looked closely at the work in pupils' exercise books and talked to them about their work.
- Inspectors looked at a range of the school's documents, including assessment information. They checked the school's single central record of pre-employment checks and other documentation concerned with the safer recruitment of staff and volunteers.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, other staff and two groups of pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with parents as they brought their children to school. Inspectors considered 61 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 58 free-text responses.
- Inspectors took account of 23 responses to the staff survey and 102 to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Wendy Varney, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Fiona Webb

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must meet the following independent school standards

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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