

# Inspection of High Elms Manor School

High Elms Lane, High Elms Manor, Watford, Hertfordshire WD25 0JX

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Inspection dates: 10–12 December 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
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Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
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Personal development	<b>Good</b>
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Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
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Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	<b>Yes</b>
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## **What is it like to attend this school?**

High Elms Manor School is a calm and supportive place to learn. Leaders and staff have high expectations that all pupils will grow in confidence and develop as individuals. Pupils are encouraged to play an active part in their learning and always try their best.

Pupils are friendly and courteous with each other, and with adults and visitors in school. Pupils understand the importance of treating each other with respect. They enjoy coming to school, learning and school life.

Pupils told us that staff look after them well. They are confident that if they had any worries staff would sort them out quickly. As one pupil commented, 'Everyone gets on really well here because we all know each other very well.' Pupils say that bullying does not happen but if it did leaders have good systems for dealing with it.

Almost all parents are pleased with the work of the school, especially the way that their children are cared for and the positive gains their children make in their learning. Some parents spoke about how communication is improving. They appreciate the increase of information they now receive about school life and would like this to continue through the school's website.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders make sure teachers follow a broad and well-sequenced curriculum. Across subjects, teachers' plans set out, step-by-step, the order in which pupils will learn new knowledge and skills. This helps pupils to better their knowledge and understanding over time. Pupils use subject-specific vocabulary when speaking and in their written work, confidently and accurately. For example, Year 5 pupils used scientific terminology to talk to us about the processes of respiration and digestion.

Discussions with pupils and work in their books show that they make good progress across different subjects including English, mathematics, science and geography. They develop a range of skills and apply them well, for example when carrying out science investigations or learning about different landscapes. Older pupils told us that learning about nouns, verbs and adjectives in Year 2 really helped to develop their writing skills. While pupils learn the skills to write successfully, teachers do not routinely give them the opportunities to use these skills and deepen their learning. Pupils told us they would like more extended and creative writing tasks, so they can write with imagination and flair.

Leaders have made the development of early reading skills a priority. Teachers and well-trained teaching assistants lead phonics sessions that follow a clear order. Most pupils enjoy reading, and confidently use their phonics skills to tackle unfamiliar words. Pupils who are struggling to read get the right support and catch up quickly.

Pupils behave well in their lessons and around the school. During the inspection,

despite the additional excitement of Christmas events, pupils were engaged in their lessons, listened to staff and responded to instructions quickly. Parents, pupils and staff all agree that behaviour is typically good. This is confirmed by school records, which show that misbehaviour is rare.

Leaders successfully promote pupils' personal development. Visits, including to the Natural History Museum and various places of worship, enrich pupils' learning and help them to become responsible citizens in modern Britain. During a Christingle assembly, pupils reflected on why Christmas is important to Christians. Pupils happily raise funds for others and show concern for those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils keenly showed us their 'caught being kind' display where pupils had written about their acts of kindness to others, or how others had been kind to them.

Leaders and staff are ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They adapt lessons and provide additional resources that help pupils with SEND to learn effectively and play a full part in school life.

Children get off to a good start in the early years. Routines are established so children settle promptly and respond positively to the high expectations of behaviour. Staff develop children's speaking and listening skills successfully, including those children who speak English as an additional language. Staff ensure that children are safe and safeguarding arrangements are secure. Most children leave the Reception class well prepared for Year 1.

The proprietor and headteacher have ensured that the independent school standards are met. The school complies with the statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage and The Equality Act 2010. Leaders check that school policies are applied consistently. Leaders also monitor the quality of education to make sure that pupils achieve well. However, leaders mainly focus on what teachers are doing during lessons and less on what pupils are learning and the progress they make across all subjects.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure all staff undergo thorough background checks and safeguarding training before they commence their employment at the school. Regular training ensures that staff are confident in identifying and reporting concerns about pupils. Leaders act promptly to get families the help they need.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They know what to do if they are worried. As a result, pupils are well placed to make good decisions when they feel at risk.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- Although communication with parents has improved since the previous inspection, leaders need to make sure that the school's website is updated and maintained so that it provides useful information for parents and accurately reflects the work of the school.
- Most pupils make good progress with their writing; however, leaders need to plan more opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills through extended and creative activities that deepen pupils' learning so that they achieve as well as they can.
- Leaders need to sharpen how they monitor the quality of education, shifting the focus from what teachers do in lessons to checking the progress pupils make in all subjects throughout the curriculum. This will support teachers better to address any underachievement.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117660
<b>DfE registration number</b>	919/6234
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10113575
<b>Type of school</b>	Montessori primary
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	65
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	13 in the early years
<b>Proprietor</b>	The O'Neill Partnership
<b>Headteacher</b>	Liadain O'Neill
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£10,500 – Reception £11,445 – Years 1 to 3 £12,750 – Years 4 to 6
<b>Telephone number</b>	01923 681103
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.highelmsmanorschool.com">www.highelmsmanorschool.com</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@highelmsmanorschool.com">admin@highelmsmanorschool.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6–8 December 2016

## Information about this school

- High Elms Manor is a small independent primary school. The school follows the Montessori ethos and teaching methods.
- The proprietor is a family-owned, limited company. The school has been owned and run by the same family since it was founded in 1997. The proprietor provides the governance for the school.
- The school is registered with the Department for Education to admit up to 100 pupils aged three to 11 years.
- The school does not comply with the registration agreement as it is recorded on The Department for Education website 'Get Information about Schools'. The record of the proprietor is not up to date.

- This inspection does not include The Nest, which is on the same site as the school. The Nest is registered separately with Ofsted to provide full and part-time day care for babies and children up three years. The most recent inspection of the provision took place in January 2019, when it was judged as good. The inspection report can be found on Ofsted's website.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school does not use supply staff.
- The school was previously inspected in December 2016, when it was judged to be good. All the independent school standards were met at that time.
- The current headteacher took up post in September 2017.

## Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This inspection was carried out with a day's notice.
- As part of this inspection, we held meetings with the headteacher, who is also the designated safeguarding leader and the school's special educational needs team. We also met with the proprietor, teachers and other staff.
- We undertook deep dives into reading, writing, mathematics, science and geography. We met with the curriculum leaders, visited lessons, examined pupils' workbooks and met with pupils. We also observed some pupils reading to staff and talked to pupils about their reading habits.
- We spoke to pupils informally in class and around the school at breaktimes to seek their views about the school. We attended the school's breakfast club and an assembly.
- We scrutinised the school's website and a range of school documents, including the school's own evaluation, improvement plans, schemes of work, staff training files, and records about behaviour, safeguarding children, attendance and the health and safety of pupils. The school's compliance with the regulations for independent schools was checked.
- We considered the 17 responses made by parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 17 responses to Ofsted's free-text system. Inspectors also spoke to parents at the start of the school day and held telephone conversations with some parents.
- Additionally, inspectors took account of the 11 responses to Ofsted's online staff

survey and the four responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.

### **Inspection team**

Fiona Webb, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Clementina Aina

Ofsted Inspector

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