

Inspection of The White House School

Heath Road, Whitchurch, Shropshire SY13 2AA

Inspection dates: 2 to 4 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a small, friendly school where pupils feel safe. Pupils enjoy coming to school, they attend well, and arrive on time. Friendships are positive and pupils are generally kind to one another. They say that while bullying does happen, teachers are quick to put it right.

Staff want the best for pupils. However, leaders do not have a clear oversight of the quality of education in the school. This means that not all pupils are doing as well as they could. The curriculum is not joined up, so pupils are not prepared for their next stage of learning. A small number of pupils need additional support. Teachers do not carry out checks on their learning to ensure that they are getting the help they need.

Staff do not manage behaviour consistently well across the school. In some classes, pupils are frequently requested to stop speaking when they are in fact talking about their learning. This has a detrimental impact on their understanding and often interrupts productive discussion. In contrast, low-level disruption is not managed quickly enough. This also stops pupils learning.

The school provides rich opportunities for learning beyond the main lessons. Pupils attend and enjoy lunchtime and after-school clubs. They engage in charitable work and enjoy being active members of the community.

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

The headteacher is a full-time class teacher. She is also the proprietor. As a result, she has been unable to dedicate sufficient time to leading the school.

School leaders would like the curriculum to be ambitious and challenging. However, owing to the lack of curriculum oversight, learning in too many subjects is not connected. New learning does not link to and build on what pupils already know. Pupils spend too much time completing tasks that do not match the aims of the lesson. Consequently, knowledge and skills are not developed well over time and gaps develop in pupils' learning.

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes take part in a range of activities. They enjoy singing songs and listening to rhymes, and they engage well in play-based sessions. However, what children learn in this class is disconnected from the rest of the school and has been planned in isolation. The curriculum does not prepare children with the skills and knowledge they need for key stage 1. For example, children do not have a secure understanding of the world, and so start Year 1 with limited geographical awareness.

A small number of pupils need additional support with their learning. Teachers step in and help these pupils when required. However, leaders do not routinely check the impact of this work. Teachers use several standardised schemes to help them plan

lessons. However, the schemes have not been adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. In these instances, pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Leaders have not consistently monitored the teaching of reading. In the Nursery and Reception classes, children access daily phonics activities and build on their vocabulary. However, in Years 1 and 2, some sounds are mispronounced by teachers. This affects pupils' ability to remember the sounds that letters represent. Sounds that pupils do not remember are not routinely revisited. In the older year groups, teachers have thought more carefully about reading and how they teach it. There is a stronger focus on learning new vocabulary and understanding texts. However, pupils' participation in these lessons is variable. Older pupils read with confidence and fluency. They enjoy reading at home and school. The lack of a consistent approach to reading across the school means that stronger practice is not shared between classes.

Opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills are not planned well enough. In Years 1 and 2, many activity choices do not help pupils to improve their writing. Pupils do not learn how to extend their sentences, nor how to use grammar appropriately. Consequently, pupils do not have the writing skills they need to prepare them for work in Year 3 and beyond.

The checks that teachers make on pupils' learning are inconsistent. In classes where staff do it well, assessment of pupils' work informs their next steps in learning and pupils' targets build on what they already know. However, where this is not planned as well, work is repeated and does not connect to new learning.

The school's approach to behaviour management is not consistent. On many occasions, teachers impose behavioural requests without the need to do so, for example, in asking pupils to stop talking when they are working on group tasks. This interrupts pupils' learning and prevents worthwhile, focused conversations and discussions.

Since returning to school, following successive periods of COVID-19 restrictions, teachers have focused on developing pupils' social skills. Several extra-curricular opportunities are on offer and are well attended. Pupils engage well in music club, choir, art and sports activities. Pupils learn about and respect people who are different from them.

Leaders have not monitored the quality of education carefully enough. They have not addressed weaknesses in the curriculum effectively. Staff want the best for their pupils. However, some need support to improve their subject knowledge and to manage pupils' behaviour. However, some teachers have managed well without direction and support. In these classes, pupils are developing and achieving well due to well-planned lessons that build on what pupils already know. Time constraints in the school prevent the sharing of stronger practice.

The headteacher is also the proprietor of the school. The school does not have a governing body. The strategic vision and direction of the school are set by the

headteacher alone. She is aware of weaknesses in the school, but lacks the capacity to make improvements. This is because she holds multiple roles within the school that take up a considerable amount of her time.

The proprietor meets the statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) and complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. However, several of the independent school standards are not met. This ineffective practice negatively affects how well pupils learn and achieve. Pupils' welfare, health and safety are, on occasion, not well promoted. For example, at the time of the inspection, there was no hot water in washrooms and the building was cold. Although decisive action was taken during the inspection to remedy this, the proprietor has not taken effective action to make sure that the independent school standards are met consistently and continually.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website and gives due regard to current government guidance. Paper copies are also available.

There are two designated safeguarding leads. They have completed appropriate multi-agency training and are clear about their roles and responsibilities. All staff have completed suitable training in child protection and know how to recognise signs of abuse and neglect. They know about radicalisation and exploitation. Staff know how to raise concerns, which they do so quickly when needed. Leaders maintain appropriate records and review these regularly. The school's single central record meets requirements.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The curriculum is not well planned and ordered. This means that learning does not build on what pupils already know and are able to do. Children in early years are not sufficiently prepared for Year 1. The proprietor needs to develop the curriculum across the school to enable pupils to build on their previous learning, so that knowledge and skills develop well over time.
- Leaders' monitoring of the curriculum is not effective. Some staff are not getting the support they need to plan and deliver the curriculum effectively. There are limited opportunities for staff to share good practice. Leaders need to monitor the delivery of the curriculum so that they can use the information to support staff training and to make changes to the curriculum if needed. They need to ensure that all staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver a curriculum that helps pupils to achieve well.
- Staff do not implement the behaviour policy effectively. This means that pupils' behaviour is not well managed across the school. In most classes and during unstructured times, pupils' behaviour is overly managed. This limits productive

discussion and prevents pupils from expressing their ideas. Leaders need to revise the behaviour policy to make sure that it is understood by all staff and pupils, implemented effectively, and helps pupils to manage their own behaviour.

- The needs of pupils who require additional support and those who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan are not consistently met. Leaders do not monitor this work closely enough. Leaders need to make sure that the needs of all pupils are clearly identified. They need to ensure that adaptations to learning are appropriate and help pupils to achieve as well as they should.
- The proprietor has not made sure that the independent school standards are consistently and continually met. This, on occasion, negatively affects pupils' welfare, health and safety. The proprietor needs to ensure that regulatory checks are given priority to ensure compliance with the independent school standards.

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School details

Unique reference number	123615
DfE registration number	893/6013
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10205086
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	83
Number of part-time pupils	5
Proprietor	Helen Clarke
Headteacher	Helen Clarke
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,400
Telephone number	01948 662730
Website	www.whitehouseshropshire.co.uk
Email address	whitehouseschool@btconnect.com
Date of previous inspection	16 to 18 May 2017

Information about this school

- The White House School is a small independent day school located in Whitchurch, Shropshire. The school is based in a former telephone exchange building. It has a number of spacious learning areas, a large hall and outdoor space.
- The school was last inspected in May 2017, when it was judged to be good with outstanding personal development.
- The school offers a breakfast club as well as several after-school clubs.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, who is also the proprietor. Meetings were held with the special educational needs coordinator, the literacy lead, the early years lead and the geography lead.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, early reading and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to groups of pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and reviewed pupils' work across other subjects. The lead inspector also listened to pupils read.
- The lead inspector reviewed the safeguarding policy, the school's safeguarding records and the single central record. A meeting was held with the designated safeguarding leads. Inspectors spoke to several staff about safeguarding processes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher to talk about pupils' behaviour. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lesson visits and during unstructured times.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including policies about the curriculum, behaviour, health and safety and complaints. The lead inspector discussed the school's self-evaluation and development plan with the headteacher.

- The inspection team took account of the responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey. The team also considered the staff survey responses and the pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Melanie Callaghan-Lewis, lead inspector Ofsted Inspector

Janet Satchwell Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work–
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress; and
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress;
 - 3(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly.
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Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that–

- 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively
- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.
- 28(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
- 28(1)(b) toilets and urinals have an adequate supply of cold water and washing facilities have an adequate supply of hot and cold water.

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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