



Office for Standards
in Education

Dame Catherine Harpur's School

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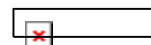
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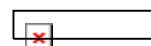
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Introduction and summary

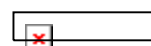


Purpose and scope of the inspection



This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

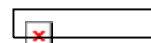


Dame Catherine Harpur's School is a non-selective, small, rural independent school on the edge of Ticknall village in Derbyshire. There are 35 pupils aged three to eleven on roll and the numbers of pupils has more than doubled since 1999. The school was originally opened as a cooperative venture and is now registered as a charitable trust. A management team of eight, including three parents and the headteacher, runs the school.

The school consists of three purpose-built classrooms, a library and meeting area. The outdoor playgrounds and gardens offer good opportunities for sport and recreation.

There are no entrance examinations and the pupils do not take part in standard assessment tests at the end of Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2. The school offers a flexible curriculum. This is guided primarily by the National Curriculum and endeavours to keep the education of the whole child at its centre. The aims of the school include helping pupils to develop a responsible and independent attitude to learning and to prepare for their role in society. The school also aims to promote tolerance and respect for the rights and property of others.

Summary of main findings



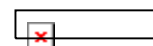
Dame Catherine Harpur's School provides a happy and secure environment for children. Strong emphasis is placed on good pastoral care, and the school helps pupils to develop into confident young people. The headteacher provides committed leadership. Parents strongly support the view that their children like coming to school and that the staff expect pupils to work hard and do their best. They appreciate the values and attitudes that pupils learn and believe the school enables a good standard of work to be achieved.

The curriculum is generally broad although improvements are needed in some areas, particularly to cater appropriately for the range of aptitudes and abilities among the pupils. Overall, the quality of the teaching is sound, and there is some very good teaching for the youngest pupils. There is a strong sense of community and parents play an important role in the day-to-day running of the

school. The pupils are happy and feel safe and valued. Some of the school's policies need to be updated; however, they include clear guidelines.

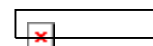
There are a number of regulatory requirements, which the school does not meet at present, but it is well placed to tackle these issues in the future.

What the school does well



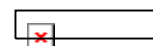
- there is a happy, family atmosphere and the staff, pupils and parents are committed to the school;
- the school is successful in helping its pupils to grow in self-esteem and confidence;
- pupils are valued and respected and all staff work hard to ensure their welfare and personal development;
- the quality of teaching in the early years is very good and it is good overall in Key Stage 1;
- the provision for swimming is very good; and
- the school communicates effectively with parents.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations



- where pupils have a statement of special educational needs (SEN), ensure that their education fulfils its requirements;
- develop and implement a framework for assessment so that the needs, aptitudes and prior attainment of all pupils are taken into account in lesson plans;
- provide opportunities for older pupils to produce extended pieces of writing;
- improve the provision of information and communications technology (ICT) for pupils in Key Stage 1 and 2;
- ensure that a fire risk assessment is completed under the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997;
- ensure that all staff and volunteers are checked by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB);
- ensure that appropriate medical checks are carried out on all staff prior to their appointment;
- improve the quality of the premises and accommodation as set out in section 5 of this report;
- improve the information provided to parents as detailed in section 6 of this report; and
- ensure that the complaints procedure is updated to include points made in section 7 of this report.

What the school must do to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act:



- Ensure that it fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

Compliance with the regulations for registration

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1. The quality of education provided by the school

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The quality of the curriculum

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The school provides a broad curriculum, which makes satisfactory provision for pupils' academic, physical and personal development. However, although pupils learn about different cultures and beliefs there is no explicit teaching of religious education. French is taught from Year R to Year 6 and the school employs a specialist music teacher who focuses on the more technical aspects of music. The provision for swimming is very good. Pupils in Key Stage 2 benefit from drama workshops.

There is a good range of policies in place; however, some are in need of being updated. The school makes satisfactory use of material from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and commercially produced schemes of work. This helps to provide teachers with guidance, which promotes the continuity and progression of pupils' learning. However, much of the curriculum is adapted and designed for the interests of pupils. This presents teachers with a considerable challenge where the range of abilities and age in a class is very broad.

The curriculum for children under five years takes account of the nationally recommended guidance for this age group. The curriculum in the nursery is well planned. Children learn from a wide range of activities and adults make very good use of resources, including ICT, to challenge and extend pupils' learning. There is a very good balance between adult-directed and child-initiated activities. These are complemented by the high quality of the teaching and the inspirational learning environment. Consequently, children's natural curiosity is encouraged to develop and they quickly become independent and enthusiastic learners.

The curriculum in Key Stage 1 includes many opportunities for pupils to take part in practical activities. These help to make their learning meaningful and purposeful as well as enjoyable. However, the planned activities in both Key Stages do not always ensure that pupils are achieving as well as they might. There is insufficient provision for ICT for the pupils in these classes. Furthermore, much of the equipment is old and unreliable and needs to be replaced.

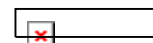
In Key Stage 2, the teaching meets the emotional needs of pupils. However, planning does not take sufficient account of activities and strategies to meet the academic needs of pupils with SEN. There is also insufficient additional provision for these pupils. This places excessive demands on the class teacher who spends a disproportionate, but necessary, amount of time trying to cater for their needs. As a result, the rest of the class does not have an equitable amount of her time, support and attention.

Pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory. They develop very good basic skills in the early years, which continue to be extended effectively in Key Stage 1. However, the progress and continuity of their learning are not sufficiently sustained for all pupils in Key Stage 2. In addition, a minority of boys have a tendency to dominate during lessons. As a result, the majority of girls in Key Stage 2

do not contribute to whole class discussions and debates as much as they could and there is often insufficient challenge for the highest attaining pupils. Nevertheless, pupils' spoken language skills are good and they can express their thoughts and feelings clearly and coherently.

There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, including sports and drama, as well as school trips and outings, all of which help to enrich the curriculum.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



All of the pupils benefit from the school's positive ethos and its family atmosphere. The pupils enjoy their time at school and enter the building each morning looking forward to the day ahead. Good relationships between staff and pupils are evident throughout the school. The teachers make effective use of the valuable support given by teaching assistants and parents to enhance pupils' learning further.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good in Key Stage 1 and very good in the nursery. In the lessons observed in Key Stage 2, although there were many strengths, there were also significant weaknesses. On occasion, the demands of teaching the Key Stage 2 class with its very broad age and ability range reduces the quality of teaching and learning.

In the most successful lessons, the teachers are confident in their subject. There is good explicit teaching of key vocabulary which pupils are encouraged to read, write and use when answering questions. In these lessons, pupils also engage in practical activities, which enable them to work collaboratively, sharing ideas and strategies. In science in the Key Stage 1 and Year R class, the teacher outlines and explains the learning objectives. These are clearly displayed and are revisited at the end of the lesson. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to write or make notes. In Key Stage 2 the teacher uses questioning effectively to assess pupils' understanding and to extend their learning, as in a very good art lesson.

In the less successful lessons, there are some common weaknesses. Often, there is a lack of detail in teachers' planning which results in activities not meeting the needs and abilities of the lowest and highest attaining pupils. There is an insufficient range of teaching and learning strategies to enable these pupils to make good progress. This leads to missed opportunities, for example, of undertaking practical activities in science in Key Stage 2 or using the computer or hand-held mini-whiteboards to write or make jottings in English and mathematics.

There is also insufficient planning for older pupils to produce extended pieces of independent writing. This reduces the quality of their written work across the curriculum and limits their potential to achieve well in English.

The progress that pupils make is satisfactory overall. Teachers work hard to match work to the pupils' aptitudes. However, this match is not always as effective as it should be. Most planning does not refer specifically to pupils' prior attainment or their needs. Furthermore, it does not include the academic targets contained in individual education plans for those pupils with SEN. Where the work is tailored to their needs, these pupils make very good progress, as in a drama workshop. This session included several adults who provided small groups of pupils with appropriate levels of support. There were very good opportunities for all pupils to be active participants in developing sketches about caring for the environment and the effects of pollution. The pupils with SEN were fully engaged. As a result, they remained on task, well behaved and were able to shine.

Effective use is made of a suitable range of resources, except for ICT. The nursery is very well resourced with an attractive range of appropriate materials and equipment. Teachers provide interesting, bright and colourful displays demonstrating that they value the pupils' work. For

example, good use was made of a display on forces in science in Key Stage 1, when the pupils referred to the display for information during a class discussion on a range of forces.

Although there is no written framework for assessment, procedures are very good in the nursery and good in Key Stage 1, where teachers make effective use of assessments to supplement their day-to-day knowledge of the pupils. Assessments provide information on the progress that pupils make over time. In the nursery, effective use is made of an entry profile completed by parents. The children's development is recorded each term and parents are sent details of their child's progress. Parents have the opportunity to comment on the report. On entry to the main school, a baseline assessment is undertaken. Full reference is made to the nursery records or those from other settings. The information gained from assessment enables teaching in the nursery to match individual pupils' needs and this is reflected in the planning. Together with their teacher, the pupils in Key Stage 1 have devised a useful marking code to help them understand how to improve their work. However, there is insufficient assessment in Key Stage 2. The marking of work does not inform pupils sufficiently of what they need to do to improve. The pupils appreciate the verbal feedback they receive during lessons, but they do not all remember their teacher's helpful comments.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

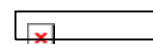
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- where a pupil has a statement of SEN, ensure that the education provided fulfils the requirements of the statement (paragraph 1(2)(e);
- provide opportunities for older pupils to produce extended pieces of writing and improve the provision of ICT in Key Stages 1 and 2 (paragraph 1(3)(a); and
- develop and implement a framework for assessment so that the needs, aptitudes and prior attainment of all pupils are taken into account in lesson plans (paragraphs 1(3)(d) and 1(3)(g)).

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils



Pupils' moral and cultural development is good. They have a good understanding of right and wrong and are encouraged to be tolerant and understanding of others. They learn about other cultures when celebrating festivals and listening to music from around the world.

There are some opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual awareness; however, this aspect of their personal growth is less well developed. Nevertheless, it is clearly demonstrated in pupils' appreciation of, and consideration for, the natural environment and in their work in art and science.

The social development of the majority of pupils is good, and playtimes are enjoyed by all pupils as they interact and play cooperatively. However, in some lessons a minority of pupils become disruptive. They call out, shout, and annoy other pupils. This can be distracting for other pupils and wastes valuable teaching time. Nevertheless, undesirable behaviour is managed sensitively and in a manner which prevents it from escalating. All staff encourage pupils to resolve disputes amicably.

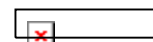
The school places a strong emphasis on fostering the pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence. Pupils' efforts and achievements are regularly celebrated on occasions like 'show and tell' and through the effective use of rewards and 'Golden Time'.

There is a strong sense of community shared equally by the staff and the pupils, who relate extremely well together.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



Overall, the school's provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils is good.

The school has a range of policies to safeguard and promote the pupils' welfare. These are implemented effectively. The school follows the local education authority's policy and guidelines for child protection. Clear policies and procedures are in place for promoting and maintaining good behaviour and eliminating bullying. The school has recently introduced "Golden Time" on Friday afternoons for pupils who have maintained good behaviour or made considerable effort with their work. The pupils appreciate this reward and strive to achieve it. The school keeps records of any incidents of unacceptable behaviour.

Procedures for safety on out-of-school visits are very good. Risk assessments are undertaken for every aspect of the wide range of visits. All adults who transport pupils to the swimming pool hold appropriate insurance and ensure that pupils wear seat belts. Health and safety procedures are thorough, except for the lack of a fire risk assessment. The school maintains an appropriate log of the fire drills, which take place every term. Fire evacuation notices are displayed clearly throughout the building and fire-fighting equipment is checked annually. The School Safety Group meet each term and produces an appropriate assessment of any current hazards, which are attended to quickly.

There are clear and detailed procedures for First Aid, which are known by all staff. The three teachers hold current First Aid qualifications. First Aid boxes are easily accessible.

Admission and attendance registers are maintained correctly. The attendance registers are completed at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions.

Although the Equal Opportunities policy takes full regard of the needs of pupils with physical disabilities, the school has not yet drawn up a statement in relation to its duties under the DDA.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

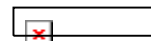
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- complete a fire risk assessment (paragraph 3(5)); and
- ensure it fulfils its duties under the DDA.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff



Dame Catherine Harpur's School Trust Ltd is the proprietor of the school. The members of the Trust meet on a regular basis and are active in making decisions that guide the school's development with regard to the premises and finance.

Teachers bring a good range of interests and expertise to the school. The school has established procedures for the recruitment of staff. However, these do not fully meet current requirements. For example, there are some staff, including volunteers, who have not been checked by the CRB before they started working at the school. Furthermore, the school does not check the medical fitness of staff prior to their appointment.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

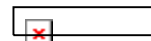
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- ensure that all staff, including volunteers, are checked by the CRB for their suitability to work with children (paragraph 4(b)); and
- ensure that appropriate medical checks are carried out on all staff prior to their appointment (paragraph 4(c)).

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



Overall, the premises and accommodation are suitable for their purpose. The school is housed in a Victorian building with two playgrounds, one for the nursery children and the larger of the two for the main school. The playgrounds are sufficiently spacious for the current number of pupils. At the rear of the school is an attractive grassed area with seating, a soft surfaced area with a climbing frame and a small garden used for gardening and topic work. Shade is provided in the summer by large trees.

Problems from rising and penetrating damp in the classrooms and library area have been dealt with, but the problem remains in the office. The door needs to remain open to provide adequate ventilation. All exits from the building are sufficient in size to enable pupils to enter and leave the building safely.

The classrooms are adequate in size for the number of pupils on roll. The nursery is spacious, well lit and warm and it has its own entrance. The two classrooms in the main school are organised appropriately for the respective age groups, but lack of storage space is a problem throughout the school. This means that all resources are on display and the rooms do not always look as tidy as they could. Furniture is appropriate in size and design in all classrooms.

The room between the main school and the nursery is used as a library, a meeting place for the whole school and for specialist teaching of music. This area is also used if a pupil feels unwell as it is in close proximity to washroom facilities.

The standard of decoration is just satisfactory. However, teachers display pupils' work attractively to enhance the environment. The floors are carpeted in the teaching areas, which lowers noise levels.

The school makes very good use of a local swimming pool and the nearby community centre hall. The facilities at the swimming pool are good. The community centre hall is spacious, clean and warm. The flooring is suitable for gymnastics, dance and games, although there is no provision for the pupils to work with large pieces of apparatus.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

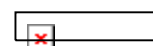
The school meets all but two of the requirements.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- improve the quality of the premises and accommodation by ensuring that there is reasonable resistance to damp and sufficient ventilation in the school office (paragraphs 5(f) and 5(p)).

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The school communicates well with parents. A high proportion of parents responded to the questionnaire sent out to them before the inspection. They express strong levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the school. They feel they are kept well informed about the progress made by their children and feel comfortable about approaching the school with any concerns or queries.

The school's prospectus includes information about its aims, ethos and curricular provision. However, it does not provide the headteacher's name or the name, address and telephone number of the proprietor.

The parents of children in the nursery receive a detailed report each term of their children's progress towards the Early Learning Goals, the recommended curriculum for this age group. Parents' comments indicate that the reports are greatly appreciated. In the main school, reports are completed annually and provide details of attainment and progress in each subject, but do not include any test results. Parents can talk with teachers at two open evenings each year. However, in practice, teachers make themselves available whenever a parent wishes to speak with them, before or after school. Newsletters about current events keep parents fully informed. The parents' notice board in the central area displays policies and notices.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

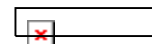
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- provide parents with information in the school's prospectus about the name of the headteacher and the name, address and telephone number of the proprietor (paragraphs 6(2)(a) and 6(2)(b)); and
- provide a copy of the fire risk assessment referred to in section 3 of this report to the Secretary of State upon request (paragraph 6(9)).

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints



The school has made good progress in drawing up a complaints procedure, but as yet, it does not meet all the regulations.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

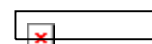
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- update its complaints procedure to include a clear time scale for the management of a complaint (paragraph 7(c));
- appoint a panel of at least three people who have not been directly involved in responding to a written complaint which has not been resolved (paragraph 7(f));
- appoint a person to the panel who is independent of the running of the school (paragraph 7(g));
- ensure the policy states that parents attending a panel hearing may be accompanied if they wish (paragraph 7(h));
- ensure that the policy states that the complainant, proprietors, headteacher and where relevant the person complained about, will receive a copy of any of the main findings and recommendations (paragraph 7(i)); and
- ensure that the policy states that all relevant correspondence, statements and records of complaints will be kept confidential (paragraph 7(k)).

School details



Name of school:	Dame Catherine Harpur's School		
DfES ref number:	830-6020		
Type of school:	Pre-Preparatory and Preparatory		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 18,	Girls 14,	Total 32
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys 1,	Girls 2,	Total 3
Number of boarders:	Boys 0,	Girls 0,	Total 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 1,	Girls 0,	Total 1
Annual fees (day pupils):	£2,300		
Annual fees (boarders):	-		
Address of school:	Rose Lane Ticknall Derbyshire DE73 1JW		
E-mail address:	damecatherines@hotmail.com		
Telephone number:	01332 862792		
Fax number:	-		

Headteacher:	Ms Margaret Whyte
Proprietor:	Dame Catherine Harpur's School Trust Ltd
Chair of the governing body:	-
Lead Inspector:	Mrs G Gordelier HMI
Dates of inspection:	22 - 24 March 2004

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