



Office for Standards
in Education

Grittleton House School

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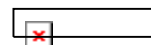
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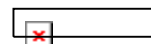
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Introduction and summary

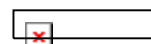


Purpose and scope of the inspection



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.

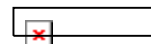
Information about the school



Grittleton House School opened in 1951 and moved to its present site in 1967 when it also changed its name. It caters for boys and girls between the ages of two and sixteen years. The proprietors take a keen and active interest in the running of the school which is situated in a large Victorian mansion in the small village of Grittleton, near Chippenham in Wiltshire. There are 157 boys and 122 girls on roll. Thirty-one of these children are below compulsory school age and 26 of these are funded under the government's Nursery Scheme. There are six pupils for whom English is not their principal language. No pupils have statements of special educational needs.

The school's main aim is to: 'help each child achieve its fullest potential, be that purely academic or in other fields'. It is non-selective and endeavours to provide an environment where children will develop their abilities with confidence. As a result, the promotion of courtesy and self-respect are important aspects of school life.

Summary of main findings



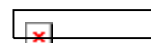
Grittleton House School provides a good education for its pupils. It is a caring school where the strong sense of community and positive ethos promote high levels of self-esteem in pupils, who develop into mature and confident young people. The quality of teaching is good overall and the curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the pupils' needs. The Foundation Stage curriculum is very good and provides pupils with a flying start to their school life. There are particular strengths in art and design and in provision for special educational needs in the junior school. Whilst pupils' work is assessed regularly the school does not analyse sufficiently the results of these assessments in order to identify areas of difficulty or to set targets for pupils.

What the school does well



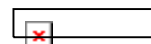
- it makes all pupils feel welcome and valued;
- it gives children in the Foundation Stage a very good start to their education;
- it provides a high level of support for pupils with special educational needs between the ages of two and eleven;
- it provides a well balanced curriculum that includes all the subjects of the national curriculum together with religious education and modern foreign languages;
- the quality of teaching is good overall because teachers plan lessons thoughtfully and mark pupils' work carefully;
- policies and schemes of work are well documented and provide a good basis for planning pupils' academic education;
- pupils behave very well, have confidence, high self-esteem and show consideration and kindness to others; and
- pupils' work in art and design is of a particularly high quality.

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



- ensure that chemicals are stored and vented safely as detailed in section 3 of this report.

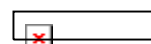
Next Steps



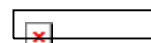
Whilst not specifically required by the regulations, the school may wish to consider the following points as areas for development:

- to develop a more analytical approach to assessment, firstly to track pupils' progress closely and to set them challenging targets for further work based on assessments, and secondly to identify areas of difficulty within the curriculum;
- to extend the very good provision for special educational needs in the junior school to the senior school; and
- to develop systematic and reliable communication procedures at all levels.

Compliance with the regulations for registration



1. The quality of education provided by the school



The quality of the curriculum



The school provides a good, broad and balanced curriculum that covers all subjects of the National Curriculum, including religious education (RE) and modern foreign languages. In addition, for pupils in the junior school there are regular French lessons and an option for the pupils in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 to attend weekly ballet classes.

The curriculum for the three to five year old pupils is very well planned around the six areas of learning. There is strong emphasis on structured activities, experience, exploration and the development of personal and social skills. The classrooms are very well organised with full use made of the large activity area in the service court which is shared by the Foundation Stage classes.

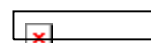
There is a clear focus on helping pupils to develop skills in numeracy, literacy, speaking and listening and an appropriate emphasis on the teaching of phonics in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1. History, geography and science are taught through a range of topics in ways that capture the pupils' interest. Art, music, design and technology and physical education, including swimming, are valued parts of the curriculum. Art is a strength of the school as shown in displays in classrooms and corridors as well as in the pupils' General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) course work. Information and communication technology (ICT) is beginning to be used effectively to support work in other subjects. Schemes of work are sufficiently detailed to enable teachers to plan effectively over the course of each term. The curriculum in the senior school offers a breadth of subjects to GCSE level.

Grittleton House affords good sporting and musical opportunities. All pupils in Year 4 learn to play a woodwind instrument as part of the curriculum. Pupils in the reception class and throughout the rest of the school can take additional music lessons for violin, cello, guitar and piano. They are coached in a wide range of sporting activities and participate competitively in local and regional leagues and athletics meetings.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs in the junior school is very good where the curriculum is adapted to suit their individual requirements. The very skilled special educational needs co-ordinators have established effective systems for identifying, planning and assessing intervention programmes, which are monitored closely. These systems ensure that these pupils can access the whole curriculum. However, in the senior school support for pupils with special educational needs is not as systematic or comprehensive.

There is an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities for pupils in Key Stage 2 and in the senior school which enhances the curriculum considerably. These activities include a wide range of sports as well as chess, jazz-dance, art and outward bound trips. There are also a number of educational visits, including theatres, a recycling centre, Lackham Agricultural College, outdoor pursuits in the Brecon Beacons, a venture week for Year 6 pupils in Devon, day trips to the Cotswold Water Park and skiing trips that enrich the curriculum still further.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



The quality of teaching throughout the school is good overall and some very good teaching takes place in all stages. Lesson planning is generally thorough and this helps to ensure a brisk pace and effective progression in pupils' work. The best teaching demands high standards and challenges pupils to apply their prior knowledge to new learning. Where teaching is only satisfactory lessons lack the detailed planning which characterises the best lessons.

The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is very good and is a strength of the school.

Teachers have a secure understanding of what the children need to achieve and their planning is detailed and effectively linked to cover the six areas of learning outlined in the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority Foundation Stage curriculum guidance. Careful explanations and high expectations characterise the nursery curriculum. The children are expected to take some responsibility for their own learning. This is continued throughout the school with the older pupils being expected to do individual research for their course work, for example in art and design. The classroom assistants play a valuable role in supporting teachers in the early years.

Teaching for pupils with special educational needs in the junior school is very good. These pupils are identified early and are provided with detailed individual education plans (IEPs). The IEPs are used effectively by teachers either in class or through individual support to provide the additional help that pupils need. They make good progress, gain confidence and achieve well. Similarly the school provides specialist teaching for pupils who speak English as an additional language. These pupils make good progress and are soon fully integrated into its life and work.

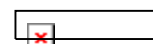
Teachers know their pupils well and relationships are good. They expect the pupils to work hard and behave sensibly, resulting in a positive working atmosphere. However, on occasions all pupils in a group are given the same task which limits the level of challenge, for example for the more able pupils. At all levels pupils are encouraged to undertake a wide range of practical and investigative work. They are challenged to predict outcomes of experiments, for example in science and to draw inferences from their work in English. In one very good history lesson, for example, pupils were enthused by cracking codes in their topic on the Second World War. Pupils are confident to ask questions when they do not understand and also to express their views during debates and discussions. Consequently pupils speak well and become confident and articulate. Teachers' subject knowledge and expertise are good. Some of the specialist teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4 is extended into the junior school making good use of the expertise available. However, there are not enough planned cross-curricular links, for example developing writing skills through other subjects. Teachers are actively encouraged to take part in up-to-date in-service training and this has a beneficial effect throughout the school.

The school uses a wide range of national and internal tests to monitor pupils' progress. In the Foundation Stage pupils' progress is carefully monitored using the local education authority's 'Building Blocks' assessments which link effectively to the Foundation Stage curriculum. The junior and senior school use the Standard Assessment Tests and GCSE respectively, together with regular internal tests and examinations. The quality of marking is good and is helpful to pupils in improving their work. The results of tests, together with teachers' knowledge, enable pupils' progress to be monitored closely. However, the school does not use the results of the tests analytically to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum or to track individual pupils' progress over time and to set more appropriately challenging targets for them. The school is aware of this and is in the early stages of refining its assessment procedures in order to raise pupils', parents' and teachers' expectations still further.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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



Pupils' spiritual development is effectively promoted. The school develops their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence very well. This is evident from pupils' talk and discussion, their demeanour and behaviour around the school as well as in the context of their relaxed but civilised bearing with each other, and with adults. Pupils are eager to learn and succeed, but at the same time they are considerate of one another. This is true even of the younger children: one infant pupil,

love listening to stories!"

Pupils' moral development is very good. They learn how to distinguish right from wrong, and respect the law through their work in lessons in history, and RE. Even in ICT, pupils consider thoughtfully questions of morality in relation to the internet, and to data protection issues. Through these means, as well as through assemblies and English lessons the school's curriculum offers many opportunities for pupils to discuss moral issues and decisions. Pupils studying *'Great Expectations'* in Year 8 for example, were urged to consider what they thought ought to be the outcome of Pip's sister's harsh ill-treatment of him, and what they considered Dickens thought should be the outcome.

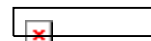
The school has an effective course in personal, social and health education (PSHE), which is extended through science, home economics and personal development lessons, which contribute further to pupils' very good social development. There are many opportunities taken across the curriculum to instil respect for rules, to shun cheating in class or in sport, building on pupils' strong feelings for natural justice, and their instincts to strive for what is right and fair. The school does valuable work in raising money for charities such as the Teenage Cancer Trust. This helps the school to develop in its pupils responsibility, appropriate behaviour, and individual and group initiative through contributions to the community. All the pupils in the school have a strong sense of belonging to a community; they all belong to a house and attend house assemblies fortnightly. In games lessons, teachers were seen to be carefully fostering children's self-esteem; pupils who are not natural athletes are shown how to improve their performance through training and practice, at the same time as those with a talent receive appropriate coaching and encouragement. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their self-knowledge. Junior school pupils are given opportunities to become "line monitors" in Year 6; each form has a form captain. In home economics, some Year 10 pupils were preparing a meal for three to five year olds, whilst others were writing a book to help these younger pupils' development. This encourages care for others. Discussions with pupils show their mature attitudes to the school. They discuss very seriously the strengths of the school and suggest sensible improvements that would benefit the other pupils and the community.

Pupils' cultural development is good. The school manages to instil a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England through their work in science, history, RE and home economics. This work includes a wide range of educational visits, for example to London, where pupils visited the Houses of Parliament, or to Lackham Agricultural Centre, and through visits from and sometimes to the local Fire Service. An appreciation and respect for their own and other cultures is provided with many opportunities through the humanities subjects, English and French lessons and with other curriculum areas. In history at GCSE level for example, pupils study the problems of Northern Ireland since the 1960's and the problems of bias in evidence in a way that helps to promote tolerance and harmony between the different cultural traditions. Good work was seen in an English lesson when a range of poems from many cultures was being revised. Pupils were reviewing their notes which recorded their judgements relating to these poems which they last worked on about a year ago. It was clear that pupils' knowledge is now being translated into a greater understanding.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



The school has a written policy on bullying which has due regard to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) guidance. It is reported by pupils to be effective and incidents that have occurred

child protection policy in line with the appropriate DfES recommendations. All staff know who is the designated child protection officer but would benefit still further from whole-staff training. The procedures file is available in the school staff room. All pupils asked knew that there was a responsible adult to whom they could turn if they had any problem.

The behaviour of pupils in and around the school is very good. The school has appropriate behaviour policies. Pupils are aware of the school's rules and of the systems of reward and sanctions that are in place. Detailed records are kept of all of the sanctions which are imposed. Health and safety risk assessments are undertaken and reviewed and the staff handbook has useful sections outlining policies and appropriate procedures, for example ensuring that laboratories are kept locked. However, in the chemistry store and 'prep' room, the metal cupboard for the storage of noxious chemicals is not currently vented to ensure that there is no build-up of fumes, and the store does not currently have separate storage of acids and alkalis. The school has a good policy on First Aid which is well implemented. It has a sick bay facility which is appropriate to the needs of the school. There is a list of three First Aiders in the school who are appropriately deployed.

The school has addressed in detail the last recommendations of the Fire Officer and has put an effective plan in place to carry out all that it can do within the limits imposed by the school being a Grade 2* listed building. The means of escape have been improved, in line with these recommendations. There are regular fire practices. The careful evaluation of these testifies to the effectiveness of the arrangements. The exterior doors provide the final exit for escape routes, but they are also part of the protected fabric of the building under the conservation and planning regulations and at present open inwards. The school is seeking a meeting of the Fire Services and the Planning and Conservation authorities in an attempt to resolve this issue of apparently conflicting recommendations.

The school has prepared a policy and an outline plan under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002, which outlines improved wheelchair access to the ground floor, and demonstrates its proven ability to cater for pupils with hearing loss and partial sight. Further improvements will require discussion with the fire officer and conservation authorities as above.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

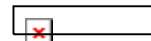
The school meets all the requirements except one.

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 a properly vented metal chemical store in line with the Care of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) regulations (paragraph 3(4)).*

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

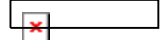


The school is privately owned and run with the proprietors taking an active roll in its day-to-day running. The headteacher has been in post for eight years. All staff are appropriately qualified and between them have a wide range of experience. The school has good procedures to systematically check all staff, including non-teaching staff, who come into contact with children with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). Whilst the school has applied to the CRB for all staff to be checked, the most recent applications have not yet been returned by the CRB. There are sound procedures to check the appropriateness of new staff before their appointment is confirmed.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The school provides good accommodation. It is housed in a Grade 2 listed, large Victorian Gothic mansion with accommodation arranged on four floors. The building is maintained in good order, but some planned developments are limited by the building's listed status. There is adequate vehicular access which is effectively restricted during playtimes. The teaching accommodation is on three floors with the basement being used for storage lockers and changing rooms.

As a result of concerns raised by senior pupils the condition of the toilets is now monitored more frequently. Concerns were expressed by parents relating to the adequacy of heating in the school. The premises are kept clean and tidy and pupils take responsibility for clearing equipment away in their classrooms. The standard of decoration is satisfactory in the teaching rooms with the public rooms offering a good standard, including period furnishings. The overall appearance of the interior is enhanced by high quality displays of the pupils' work. The playgrounds are adequate, but some of the junior pupils would like more activities available over playtimes. The nursery children have a safe, enclosed and appropriately resourced outdoor play area.

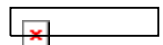
The recently refurbished computer suite and the drama theatre have enhanced the accommodation considerably, providing additional specialist teaching spaces. The accommodation for teaching pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory but resources are limited.

The teachers have created stimulating learning areas in their classrooms and in the corridors, with attractive displays which celebrate pupils' achievements and extend their learning.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



Grittleton House School provides good information for parents and is continually striving to improve communications with parents. There are good informal links with parents of children in the Foundation Stage and in the junior school, with staff being readily accessible to parents on a day-to-day basis. The long distances travelled by some pupils using school transport often limit regular communication with parents. However, the home-message book provides a useful means of sharing information on a day-to-day basis.

The school prospectus has been updated recently and contains all the necessary information including an information sheet outlining further documentation available to parents upon request. The information available for parents includes the complaints policy, the staff list and curriculum policy documents.

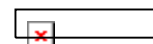
Over sixty per cent of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire. They expressed high levels of satisfaction with the school and its caring ethos. Many would value more opportunities to attend events at the school including class assemblies. The parents receive half-termly reports on their children's performance with more detailed reports at Christmas and the end of the academic

year. The quality of reporting on pupils' progress is good and parents receive helpful information about their children's levels of effort and attainment.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

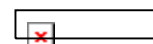


The school has a written complaints procedure, which matches the exact requirements of the regulations. It is available to parents of both present and prospective pupils, and sets out clear time scales and procedures which the school will follow in the management of any complaint. This also features in the new school prospectus and thus is readily available to all. The parental survey will be useful in identifying parents who currently may not be fully aware of the policy and procedures outlined in the document.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



Name of school:	Grittleton House School
DfES ref number:	865/6018
Type of school:	Primary and Secondary
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	2 - 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 154, Girls 117, Total 271
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys 3, Girls 5, Total 8
Annual fees (day pupils):	£4,278 to £6,948
Address of school:	Grittleton House School The Street Grittleton Chippenham SN14 6AP
E-mail address:	secretary@grittletonhouseschool.org
Telephone number:	01249 782434
Fax number:	01249 782669
Headteacher:	Mrs C Whitney
Proprietor:	J E Shipp, A F Shipp, J M Shipp and M D Shipp
Lead Inspector:	Mr David Houghton
Dates of inspection:	10 - 13 May 2004

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