



Herington House School

Independent School

Inspection report

DfES registration number 881/6024
Unique reference number 115418
Inspection number 296821
Inspection dates 7-8 February 2007
Reporting inspector Mrs Jill Bainton

Inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

Inspection of funded nursery education was carried out under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

Age group 3-11	Published 2 March 2007	Reference no. 296821
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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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

Herington House School is an independent day school for boys and girls aged three-and-a-half to eleven years. Provision for the 29 pupils receiving nursery funding was inspected separately and is reported at the end of this report. The school was founded in 1936 and has been run by the same family since 1972. It is located in purpose-built premises on Hutton Mount, close to the centre of Shenfield in Essex. Admission to the school is by interview and an informal assessment for older pupils.

The school aims to *'to provide an environment where each child can realise his or her true potential... in an extended family.'*

Evaluation of the school

Herington House School is a good school, which provides a wide range of curricular and personal development opportunities. It provides a good standard of education and pupils enjoy their school life. Parents are very supportive of the school and are pleased with the progress their children are making. Teaching is good and this enables pupils to make good progress. Pupils are well cared for, happy and courteous and their behaviour is outstanding. The school meets all but one of the regulations.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of the pupils. French augments the subjects of the National Curriculum. This is supplemented with a good range of extra-curricular clubs such as drama, conservation and sports. The curriculum ensures good progression through each subject. The school has also adapted its curriculum to meet the requirements of the local school entrance examinations, with verbal reasoning taught to pupils. The guidance for the Foundation Stage is followed effectively for the younger pupils. There is a strong emphasis on developing skills in mathematics and English and pupils all read well from a young age. The emphasis in teaching mathematics, English and verbal reasoning to the older pupils working towards the entrance examinations during the autumn term, sometimes leads to an imbalance of subjects for a short time, but this is adjusted once the examinations are over.

Form teachers teach mathematics and English to their own pupils. Specialists from Year 1 onwards teach music, science, French, information and communication technology (ICT), history, geography, religious education (RE), art and design technology, physical education, verbal reasoning and general knowledge.

Teaching throughout the school is good and pupils make good progress. The staff are well informed and plan their lessons weekly. Relationships are very good at all levels; staff and pupils interact very well. Pupils clearly enjoy their school life and work diligently in lessons. Their attitudes to learning are so good that they remain very well behaved even when, as occasionally happens, there is insufficient challenge in their work. Pupils concentrate well and most work very hard. They are motivated and do not waste time during lessons, but the pace of some lessons could be increased and pupils given more responsibility for their own learning. The teachers are generally well organised and they support individual pupils very well in lessons. The teachers use effective questioning and pupils respond positively, volunteering information, for example, in the plenary sessions at the end of the lessons. This helps both teachers and pupils to know if the latter have understood the lesson.

The range of teaching and learning styles in some of the classes for older pupils is limited due to the constraints of the classroom accommodation, with several reaching maximum capacity. However, the curriculum is enhanced by visits and trips, which are linked thoughtfully to the subjects being studied. Good use is also made of local facilities for sports activities. This effective use of the local environment and the visits to many places of interest further enriches and extends pupils' learning. There are some opportunities for investigative learning, particularly during off-site activities.

There is good use of homework to reinforce class lessons. The pupils are encouraged to present their work carefully and develop a clear handwriting style. Teachers mark the pupils' work regularly. The feedback which is given in pupils' books, although correcting matters of punctuation, spelling and presentation, rarely gives sufficient guidance on how the work could be improved.

The specialist teaching is good. For example, pupils enjoyed a lively music lesson playing percussion instruments. ICT is used effectively to support pupils' learning. Resources are sufficient and are also used well to support learning. The teaching assistants give good support and are deployed effectively by staff.

The teachers know their pupils very well and keep records of their attainment. Assessment of pupils' work is carried out regularly and teachers give good oral feedback during lessons. The staff in the Foundation Stage use the profile effectively. Pupils take end of term examinations and these results are shared with parents in the three annual written reports. The reports are satisfactory

but need to focus more on what the pupil has actually learnt and what they need to do next to improve. The teachers record pupils' progress satisfactorily through regular testing, but they do not formally identify and monitor sufficiently closely what each pupil could do next to improve their learning.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The school makes outstanding provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. There is a very friendly, welcoming atmosphere and the pupils attend regularly, and readily state that they are happy in school, some saying '*I love school...we have lots of fun.*'

The older pupils have many opportunities to take responsibility and take their role very seriously, gaining in self-confidence and using their initiative. The pupils' behaviour is outstanding, they move around the school very sensibly and quietly even though space is restricted. They know the difference between right and wrong and understand the simple, unwritten school rules. Relationships are very good at all levels, with an atmosphere of mutual respect between pupils and staff. Pupils are highly valued as individuals and are treated with kindness and consideration.

The school takes an active role in the local community and has formed strong links with the neighbouring church. Pupils make many visits around the locality and are forming a clear understanding of the way society works. The pupils are aware of others less fortunate than themselves and regularly raise money for charity. In this way, they learn to understand the importance of their future economic well-being and to contribute to their community.

Assemblies are held on four days each week and provide an opportunity for spiritual reflection. This, together with RE, gives the pupils a sound spiritual foundation. Within the RE curriculum pupils are taught about world religions and have visited a local temple. Pupils from other religions are welcomed into the school and share their cultural and religious traditions with their classmates. Art, history and drama also provide good opportunities to enrich pupils' cultural awareness.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is good. There is an appropriate range of policies which include those for behaviour, anti-bullying, health and safety on visits outside school and child protection. These are implemented effectively. Not all staff have yet received up-to-date training in safeguarding children and this is currently being remedied.

The school is a safe place in which to work and learn. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily and take regular exercise. The school is vigilant in ensuring that all necessary checks are carried out with regard to fire prevention, accidents and First Aid. Risk assessments are carried out on all visits outside the school, including the annual residential visit for the older pupils to Menorca. The school fulfils its duties with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school undertakes the full range of checks to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children.

School's premises and accommodation

The school occupies the original single-storey accommodation built in 1936, to which two additions have been added more recently, one of which is two storeys. The interior is clean and tidy. There is a small hall used for assembly, lunch and practical lessons such as music, an art room, and a fully equipped but small ICT suite.

The classrooms located in the original building are small and have reached maximum capacity for the current number of pupils. Currently the school tries to maximise the use of all available space but classroom size is a severe constraint. The classroom accommodation places some restrictions on teaching and learning styles, for example imposing limits on investigative learning. These four rooms are divided by wooden partitions, which are due for renewal. There are sufficient toilets for the number of pupils, although one set of toilets does not currently afford pupils sufficient privacy. The school has identified these shortcomings and has plans to rectify these in the very near future.

There is a large, hard surface playground at the rear of the school, which is used for play and organised games activities.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides parents and prospective parents with a good range of information. There is an attractive, informative prospectus and a 'welcome file' for new parents. Parents are given three detailed written reports on their children's progress each year; currently there is only one parent consultation evening. A very high proportion of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the school. Some, however, expressed a wish for more information on the progress their children were making. The school is now planning to hold more parents' consultation evenings and include more detail in the reports. The parents association is active in fund-raising and social events.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a set of procedures which meet the regulations. A small number of parents were unaware of these and the school has now taken steps to keep them better informed.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- ensure that all staff receive training in line with the Department for Education and Skills guidance: *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education (2007)* (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- monitor more closely what each pupil should do next to improve their learning and report this in more detail to parents
- provide more specific written guidance to pupils in their books about how to improve their work
- increase the size of classroom accommodation in order to give teachers more flexibility in teaching and learning styles.

Inspection of funded nursery education

Effectiveness of the funded nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Practitioners have a good knowledge of the Foundation Stage and are fully aware that children learn at different rates and through practical and immediate experiences. Staff

effectively plan and present a broad range of activities which actively promote children's achievement. All areas of learning are covered and children are challenged individually. Staff make regular assessments to inform their planning and these clearly show children's excellent progress towards the early learning goals. For example, some children aged four years are able to write brief accounts of their weekend news, accompanied by detailed drawings. Children respond exceptionally well to practitioners' high expectations for behaviour and their effective use of positive strategies. Children's spiritual, moral, social and emotional development is fostered. Children are confident and develop high self-esteem as staff give an abundance of praise and encouragement for their efforts and achievements. Incredibly positive and trusting relationships have been formed between children and practitioners. Children engage in conversations during social times such as snack times and their experiences are broadened as they listen to stories and look at pictures which reflect the diversity of the community. Children are kind and considerate and beginning to appreciate and show concern for the feelings of others. For example, a four-year-old assists a three-year-old who falls over in the playground.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents receive good quality information about the setting and its provision. However, they are not given fundamental written information about the Foundation Stage and how the system works. Parents are encouraged to share what they know about their children and feel well informed and involved in their children's learning. The leadership and management is good. Many children reach, and often exceed, the early learning goals as there is a clear commitment to continually improve education for all funded children. Practitioners work effectively together to create a stimulating learning environment for children and understand their roles and responsibilities in developing children's learning. The setting monitors and evaluates their provision for nursery education and staff know what is appropriate for particular children, especially those with additional needs.

Recommendations or actions to improve the funded nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education the registered person should take account of the following recommendation:

- provide more written information for parents regarding the Foundation Stage in order that they feel fully informed about their child's learning.

School details

Name of school	Herington House School		
DfES number	881/6024		
Unique reference number	115418		
Unique reference number (funded nursery education)	EY239811		
Type of school	Preparatory school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1936		
Age range of pupils	3.5-11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 38	Girls: 82	Total: 120
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 2	Girls: 7	Total: 9
Number of children receiving funded nursery education	Boys: 9	Girls: 20	Total: 29
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,240-£7,560		
Address of school	Mount Avenue Hutton Mount Brentwood Essex CM13 2NS		
Telephone number	01277 211595		
Fax number	01277 200404		
Email address	Principal@heringtonhouseschool.com		
Headteacher	Mr Robert Dudley-Cooke		
Proprietor	Mr Robert Dudley-Cooke		
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton AI		
Childcare inspector	Sandra Daniels CCI		
Dates of inspection	7-8 February 2007		