

Hampton Court House

Independent School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number	936/6586
Unique Reference Number	133443
Inspection number	317116
Inspection dates	22-23 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley HMI

This 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).

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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

Hampton Court House is situated within a large period house with extensive grounds, adjacent to Bushy Park. The school is owned by the proprietor, who is also the headteacher. The school's aim states that: *'there is a clear focus on traditional, systematic teaching which stretches and stimulates every child'*...and that it produces *'..children (who) are boundless in their enthusiasm and intellectual curiosity'*. This is the first full inspection of the school since it was fully registered in February 2005. There are 124 pupils on roll aged 3-17 years. At the time of this inspection, Year 11 pupils were on study leave. There are currently four pupils who board at the school and this provision was inspected by an inspector from Ofsted's Children's Services and Skills at the same time as this inspection of the school. A separate report has been written for the boarding provision.

Evaluation of the school

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. Academic standards are high and the pupils make good progress as a result of the good pastoral care and personal support that they receive. There is work to do to improve the quality of teaching, assessment and the curriculum so that the traditional ethos of the school is supported by clear and systematic planning and evaluation. Whilst pastoral care and attention to the needs of pupils as individuals are strengths of the school, there are weaknesses in aspects of welfare, health and safety. The headteacher and director of studies acknowledge that, as pupil numbers have increased, they have not effectively delegated some aspects of the running of the school but have recently extended the roles and responsibilities of the senior management team. Important developments have not kept pace with current requirements for registration and as a result, a number of regulations are not met.

Quality of education

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum with a number of good features. An effective emphasis is placed on reading, writing, mathematics, science and languages. This is supplemented with a range of additional experiences, resulting in all pupils from Years 1 to 9 enjoying a broad curriculum which meets regulatory requirements.

Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have access to a range of subjects which is restricted by the small pupil numbers. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory and the school has plans to extend the range of optional subjects in future years. There is no programme for careers advice. Provision for technological experience is limited throughout the school. The school has identified this and has made a specialist staff appointment and allocated a significant budget to develop information and communication technology (ICT) in the next academic year. Some pupils express a concern about the limited range of physical and sporting activities available to them. Inspectors endorse these views.

The requirements of the Independent Schools' Examination Board feature strongly in the curriculum for pupils up to the age of 13 years. These requirements are implemented effectively and the school has been very successful in securing places for pupils at major independent schools. One outstanding feature of the curriculum is the use of French and Spanish as a medium for teaching younger pupils. This results in above average attainment in languages at Key Stage 3. Chess is a unique and valued feature of the curriculum resulting in success for pupils in national competitions.

The rapid development of the curriculum in recent years has resulted in inconsistency and a lack of coherence in planning. Key planning documents currently consist largely of a list of content to be taught. There is no systematic documentation of the key objectives for learning or what pupils are expected to know and understand, in a manner which shows how the pupils will make progress across the school.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory with strengths in teaching and weaknesses in assessment. Many teachers are highly talented specialists and inspire the pupils through their enthusiasm. The individual tutoring that many pupils receive, either to support a particular talent or a learning need, is good. Traditional whole-class teaching is appropriate for most groups. Where there is a wide range of age and ability within a class, work is not matched sufficiently to their needs and abilities and this does not always help all pupils to achieve well. The pupils have much to offer in lessons but teachers do not always maximise this potential because planning does not translate clearly to a shared understanding with pupils as to why they are learning a particular topic and how to extend their thinking. The high turn-over of staff over the past two years has unsettled some pupils and their families. The school acknowledges that resources for some subjects are not adequate. Plans are already in place to address limited resources for ICT and design and technology (DT).

Procedures for assessing the pupils' progress systematically over time are developing. There are weaknesses in assessment for the youngest pupils and this needs to be improved so that planning for the full range of learning experiences can support the school's ethos. There is good planning, assessment and monitoring for those pupils that require a little extra help with their learning.

The pupils attain high standards of work and the progress that they make in relation to their ability is generally good. Their achievements in 13+ and GCSE examinations enable the pupils to move on to the next school of their choice. The pupils achieve as well as they do because of good pastoral support and individual tutoring that improves their self-esteem and confidence significantly.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Younger and older pupils play and perform together, enjoy one another's company and value each other's contributions. They also enjoy school and are well prepared in terms of their future economic well being. However, too many pupils are late for school and average attendance is lower than would be expected. Most pupils are mature, act responsibly and have a well developed sense of fairness. Younger and older pupils alike demonstrate a clear sense of right and wrong, as can be seen in their positive relationships and attitudes with one another. Their behaviour is good. They have a good appreciation of drama and music, all of which contribute well to the community ethos of the school. In addition, these aspects of the curriculum support pupils' good spiritual awareness. Their self-esteem and self confidence builds well over their time in the school and good opportunities to think and reflect on themselves and others also support their spiritual development. Opportunities to learn about cultural differences are satisfactory; improvements are planned to enable these aspects are covered more systematically throughout the curriculum.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. Staff have a strong commitment to the welfare of the pupils and provide good levels of personal support. Pupils are very well known as individuals and they report favourably on how they feel safe and how incidents of bullying, although rare, are taken seriously and managed effectively. The pupils are appreciative of the easy access that they have to senior staff. However, they feel that actions are not always followed through and senior managers accept that this is sometimes the case. A number of parents expressed concerns regarding the supervision of pupils. During the inspection the supervision of pupils in the building and the school grounds was satisfactory. A number of pupils believe that they do not receive sufficient advice about healthy eating and drinking. The required standards for boarders are not met and details are set out in the separate social care report.

The majority of the required policies are in place, although they are not always systematically compiled or readily available. Appropriate procedures have been agreed and documented for managing behaviour, assessing risk on the premises and managing fire precautions. These policies are largely implemented effectively. A small number of health and safety risks were reported to the school and are planned for attention in the next annual health and safety assessment.

The school has appropriate policies in place for the care of pupils on visits outside the school but these are not followed systematically and records are incomplete. The policy for child protection requires updating in the light of the most recent guidance. The training of the designated person for child protection is due for renewal. Whilst staff receive written policies and guidance for child protection, their training also needs updating. The school does not have a three-year plan to increase accessibility to the premises and the curriculum.

The registers for admission and attendance are not kept well. They include too many mistakes and the admission register is not up-to-date. It was noted that the school has in the past admitted pupils before their third birthday. This must not happen in the future unless there is a change in the school's registration. The school needs to tighten its procedures for authorising absence.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Pre-employment processes and procedures to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children are not robust and records are not well kept. Whilst all current staff have been checked with the Criminal Records Bureau, other checks to verify their identity and qualifications do not always take place. Similarly, character and personal references are not always sought and there are no checks for medical fitness.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is housed in an historic building in which many original features have been preserved, adding to the aesthetic appeal of the learning environment. The grounds combine suitable hard-surfaced and grassed areas which are well used. The teaching spaces vary in size and have been thoughtfully allocated to appropriate learning activities. Specialist facilities have been integrated into the premises providing effectively for science, ICT, music and art. The accommodation is maintained and decorated to a satisfactory standard.

Facilities for pupils who are ill do not meet requirements. Facilities for pupils in the boarding accommodation do not meet all the required standards as set out in the separate social care report.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school brochure is comprehensive in some respects, such as useful details about the curriculum and teachers' subject specialisms. However, it is weak in providing other aspects of the required information. It does not provide details of the proprietor or the school's arrangements for discipline or exclusions. Parents are not advised they can request additional information regarding policies for behaviour, anti-bullying, safeguarding, complaints, examination results and up-to-date details of

the number of staff and their qualifications.

Two-thirds of parents and carers returned the pre-inspection questionnaire and many provided useful comments for inspectors to consider. Of these, just over half indicated that they are completely satisfied with the school. They value the relaxed atmosphere and appreciate the way that their children have grown in confidence. Some parents do not feel comfortable about raising issues with staff. Just under half expressed a number of concerns about how the school is run. They do not feel that they are kept informed about their children's progress and are concerned about the high turnover of staff. A number also stated that they did not know about the school's complaints procedures. The way in which the school communicates with parents needs to be reviewed to ensure that information and expectations are clear.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a complaints procedure but it does not meet all requirements for registration. The policy is not readily available to parents. The headteacher and director of studies acknowledge that the policy has not been effective in dealing with parental complaints and concerns.

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 the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- ensure that the curriculum is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for all year groups (paragraph 1(2))
- provide appropriate careers advice for secondary age pupils (paragraph 1(2)(g))
- improve the range of resources for all subjects, in particular for ICT and DT (paragraph 1(3)(f)).

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

- prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with DfES guidance

Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education (2007) (paragraph 3(2)(b))

- prepare and implement a written policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school which has regard to DfES guidance *Health and safety of pupils on educational visits* (paragraph 3(2)(c))
- have regard to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (paragraph 3(3))
- maintain admission and attendance registers in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 3(9)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, ensure that all appropriate checks been carried out to confirm their identity, medical fitness, previous employment history, character references and, where appropriate, qualifications and professional references and take account of this information in determining whether their appointment will be confirmed (paragraph 4(c))
- comply with Standard 38 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (paragraph 4(d)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l))
- have regard to Standards 40–52 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (paragraph 5(u)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- provide the name of the proprietor within information to parents (paragraph 6(2)(b))
- provide particulars of the school's policy on discipline and exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e))
- ensure that parents and carers are aware that they can request particulars of policies relating to bullying, child protection, health and safety, the promotion

of good behaviour, and sanctions adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving (paragraph 6(2)(h))

- ensure that parents and carers are aware that they can request particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations (paragraph 6(2)(i))
- ensure that parents and carers are aware that they can request details of the complaints procedure adopted by the school, together with details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j))
- ensure that parents and carers are aware that they can request details of the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications paragraph 6(2)(k).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of procedures for handling complaints (standard 7) and must:

- ensure that the complaints procedure is available on request to parents and carers of pupils and prospective pupils (paragraph 7(b))
- amend the complaints procedure to allow for parents to attend the panel hearing, and, if they wish, to be accompanied (paragraph 7(h))
- stipulate that the complainant, proprietor and headteacher, and, where relevant, the person complained about, should be given a copy of any findings and recommendations (paragraph 7(i))
- stipulate that correspondence, statements and records of complaints are to be kept confidential (paragraph 7(k))
- comply with Standard 5 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (paragraph 7(l)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

School details

Name of school	Hampton Court House		
DfES number	936/6586		
Unique reference number	133443		
Type of school	Co-educational day and boarding school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	2001		
Age range of pupils	3-17 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 78	Girls: 46	Total: 124
Number of boarders	Boys: 3	Girls: 1	Total: 4
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of children receiving funded nursery education	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 7,953-£10,017		
Annual fees (boarders)	£ 13,929-£15,993		
Address of school	Hampton Court House Hampton Court Road East Molesey Surrey KT8 9BS		
Telephone number	0208 943 0889		
Fax number	0208 977 5357		
Email address	office@hamptoncourthouse.co.uk		
Headteacher	Lady Houstoun-Boswall		
Proprietor	Lady Houstoun-Boswall		
Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley HMI		
Dates of inspection	22-23 May 2007		