

St Christopher's The Hall School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	305/6010
Unique Reference Number	101687
Inspection number	320379
Inspection dates	5-6 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Joanna Toulson

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).

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

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 Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

St. Christopher's The Hall is a co-educational school for boys and girls from 3-11 years, situated in the heart of Beckenham. In 1893 it became The Hall School for girls and in 1926 amalgamated with St Christopher's. It has 295 pupils on roll with 247 full time pupils and an additional 48 pupils attending part time in the Nursery. Admission into Reception onwards is by selection. This is the first published report for the school.

Evaluation of the school

St Christopher's The Hall provides a satisfactory standard of education and a satisfactory level of support, care and guidance to its pupils. The school has good features in the overall satisfactory quality of the curriculum it provides and the behaviour and attitudes of the pupils are good. Teaching is satisfactory and as a result pupils make satisfactory progress. There are a significant number of regulations that the school does not meet.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum overall is satisfactory. The recent addition to the building to include rooms for music and drama reflects the school's commitment to providing a broad curriculum. A good, wide range of lunchtime and after school clubs are well attended by pupils and include football, fencing, chess, art, dance and photography. The school makes very good use of the locality to enrich the experiences of the pupils. On the day of the inspection, Year 6 enjoyed a theatre trip to 'Les Miserables'. Other visits include museums, the sea-side, local theatres and field centres. Residential visits in Years 3 and 4 also give opportunities for pupils to experience learning away from home. The curriculum is further enriched by several 'focus events'. These include an 'Arts Week' which involves parents working with pupils to sew, paint and make pottery. Pupils say they enjoy the visiting authors, which help to inspire their writing. Science focus days provide good opportunities for pupils to further explore scientific concepts. French is taught from Reception upwards by a specialist teacher. The school has recently introduced planning guides for each class, which provide a satisfactory overview of what is to be taught. Some teachers are beginning to use these to plan work that is matched to individual pupils'

needs, although this is inconsistent across the school. The small information and communication technology (ICT) suite is supporting the school's drive to improve the provision for ICT, although too few computers results in pupils sharing. The headteacher provides good advice to parents about transfer at the end of Year 6. A few parents feel there is too much homework.

The school rightly judges the quality of teaching and assessment as satisfactory. Warm relationships between adults and pupils encourage pupils to 'have a go'. In the best lessons, pupils make good progress because teaching is good. In these lessons, teachers take account of the individual needs of the pupils and plan activities which are appropriately challenging. Teachers make good use of questioning to allow pupils to develop their thinking. Because the pace of these lessons is good, pupils listen carefully and enjoy their learning. Good support is given to pupils who need it.

Where teaching is weaker, teachers talk for too long, and pupils have little opportunity to discuss their ideas with each other. Too much emphasis on the 'hands up' strategy prevents some pupils from taking part fully in the lesson. The over use of 'closed questions' results in pupils' thinking not being challenged. Work is not sufficiently matched to the needs of all pupils and there is an over reliance by teachers on worksheets, which are the same for all pupils in the class.

The framework of tests in the school gives good information about the attainment of pupils but teachers are not always using this to inform their teaching. The mechanism for checking how much progress pupils are making is not used effectively. This means that there is an insufficient overview about whether pupils are making the progress that is expected. The use of assessment to plan work which matches individual's needs has not been adequately addressed. The school has a marking policy but this is not always reflected in teachers' marking of pupils' work. The marking often does not give pupils enough guidance about how to improve their work.

The co-ordinator for learning support works well with teachers to put in place good extra support for pupils who need it. Overall, pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, make satisfactory progress.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good. Pupils enjoy school a great deal and the opportunities it provides. They settle to work in class when asked to do so and show good attitudes to their learning. The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is good. There is a respectful atmosphere with adults and pupils being polite to each other. Pupils are acquiring basic skills to prepare them well for their future well-being. Staff support pupils in raising money for charities at home and abroad. For example, staff, pupils and their families take part in bi-annual walks to raise money for the St. Christopher's Hospice. Pupils also raise money for medical work through the Helicopter Emergency Service and Mercy

Ships in Africa. Spiritual development is supported well through assemblies and through the study of the main religions of the world. For example, Year 4 pupils recently visited the local synagogue to extend their understanding of Judaism. Pupils are members of different 'houses' within the school and vote for their house captains, as well as for head boy or girl. Pupils' understanding of government is supported well by visits to the Houses of Parliament and by the opportunity to talk to a local member of parliament. Attendance is satisfactory.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The overall provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. A few parents expressed dissatisfaction with the school lunches. Inspectors found that satisfactory lunches are provided with a hot meal, salad, bread and fruit available, although pupils do not always make healthy choices. The school provides biscuits for break-time and this does not support pupils in making a healthy choice about their snack. However, parents have been encouraged to send in fruit for break time snack. Pupils have very good opportunities for sport and exercise because of the good provision for physical education, including swimming and the range of clubs.

Parents and pupils say they feel safe in the school. Supervision in school is good. The small numbers of pupils in each class means that they receive a good level of attention and supervision from staff. The policy relating to safety of pupils on activities outside the school, however, gives insufficient guidance to help staff assess risk. The school has an appropriately trained member of staff responsible for safeguarding pupils and the staff have recently undertaken the required training in child protection procedures. The arrangements for safeguarding children are implemented satisfactorily but the child protection policy has not been updated to take account of recent developments.

Pupils say that bullying is rare. The bullying policy does not give guidance to help staff in identifying incidents when they occur.

There is appropriate provision for first aid with many staff qualified to administer it. First aid boxes are appropriately stocked and accidents are carefully recorded but the first aid policy does not give sufficient guidance to staff to know what to do in the event of an accident. Several health and safety matters were drawn to the attention of the school.

The school has increased accessibility under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 particularly in relation to the new building. The school is drawing up a plan to review the possibility of further improving access.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school fails to meet most of the regulations for this standard because it has not given this aspect of its work sufficiently high priority or kept adequately up-to-date with current legislation and national guidance. Although staff have received an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check, the school does not maintain a

complete single central register, to show that the full range of checks have been carried out to ensure the suitability of all staff and volunteers to work with children.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is housed in an attractive listed building over three floors and maintained to a good standard. Classrooms are light and large enough to accommodate the number of pupils so that learning can take place. The new extension building provides further rooms for dance and music and these can be combined to provide a large space. Smaller music rooms provide good accommodation for those pupils having individual and small group music tuition. The furniture, fittings and decoration in the school are satisfactory. Grass and hard court areas provide good space outside. However, several potential safety hazards were evident inside the school, for example, the stair banister is not sufficiently high to provide a safe barrier to prevent pupils from falling. Windows on the first floor are not all fitted with appropriate bars and locks to prevent accidents.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school enjoys the confidence of most of its parents, although one third made negative comments on one or more areas in the pre-inspection parents' questionnaire. The school's prospectus and web site provide insufficient information to meet most of the requirements. Parents receive satisfactory termly reports on their child's work, although the grades given are sometimes unclear. The reports do not provide any targets for improvement.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a written complaints policy which sets out the procedures it will follow in the management of any complaint. It contains too little information on the elements required by the regulations and fails to meet most of them. Too many parents do not understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints.

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:

- provide guidance in the bullying policy in order that staff can identify incidents when they occur in line with DCSF guidance *Bullying: don't suffer in silence* (DCSF 0064/2000) (paragraph 3(2)(a))

- provide guidance in the child protection policy which takes account of information from recent staff training, in line with DCSF guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (2007) (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- provide guidance in the policy to support staff in assessing risk in line with DCSF guidance *Health and safety of pupils on educational visits* (HSVP2) (paragraph 3(2)(c))
- provide guidance in the first aid policy to support staff in knowing what to do in the event of an accident (paragraph 3(6))

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 including volunteers confirm that appropriate checks have been carried out to confirm their identify, medical fitness, right to work in the United Kingdom, previous employment history, character references and, where appropriate, qualifications and professional references and take this information into account in determining whether their appointment is confirmed (paragraph 4(2)(a))
- confirm that the chairperson has checked the other members of the governing body to confirm their identify, right to work in the United Kingdom, enhanced CRB check or, where appropriate, that he/she does not contravene section 142 of the 2002 Act (paragraph 4B(4) and (5))
- in relation to each member of staff in post on or after 1 August 2007, ensure the register shows checks made (and certificates obtained where relevant) of: his/her identity; qualifications (where required); whether an enhanced CRB was obtained, or where appropriate, that he/she is not working in contravention of section 142 of the Education Act 2002 (List 99); the right to work in the UK and, where relevant for those who have lived outside the UK, suitability to work in a school and the dates on which each such check was completed or the certificate obtained (paragraph 4C(2) and (3))
- in relation to each member of a body of persons named as the proprietor in post on or after 1 August 2007, ensure the register shows whether a check was made of his/her identity; right to work in the United Kingdom; and whether an enhanced CRB check was carried out and certificate obtained, or where appropriate, confirmation that he/she is not barred from working in school under section 142 of the Education Act 2002 and ensure the register also shows the date on which any check was completed or certificate obtained (paragraph 4C(6) and (7))
- keep a register, which may be kept in electronic form, provided the information so recorded is capable of being reproduced in legible form (paragraph 4C(9)).

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

- ensure that all areas of the school do not compromise safety by adding height to the banisters on the main stairs to provide adequate protection for children, and by fitting appropriate bars and locks on all the upper ground floor windows (paragraph 5(j))

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

- where the proprietor is a body of persons, the address and telephone number of its registered or principal office (paragraph 6(2)(b))
- provide the name and address of the chair of governors (paragraph 6(2)(c))
- provide a statement of the school's ethos (including any religious ethos) and aims (paragraph 6(2)(d))
- provide particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for admissions, discipline and exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e))
- provide particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements of special educational need and pupils for whom English is an additional language (paragraph 6(2)(f))
- provide 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. Ensure parents are aware they can request these (paragraph 6(2)(h))
- provide particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations. Ensure parents are aware they can request these (paragraph 6(2)(i))
- provide details of the school's complaints procedure, together with details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding year. Ensure parents are aware they can request these (paragraph 6(2)(j)).

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

- ensure that the procedure makes it clear that it is available on request to parents and parents of prospective pupils (paragraph 7(b))
- ensure the procedure makes it clear that if the parents are not satisfied with the response to a written complaint there is provision for the establishment of a hearing before a panel appointed by the proprietor of at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint (paragraph 7(f))

- ensure the procedure makes it clear that where there is a panel hearing of a complaint there is provision that one person on the panel is independent of the management and running of the school (paragraph 7(g))
- ensure that the complaints procedure provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and that the complainant, proprietors and headteacher, and, where relevant, the person complained about, should be given a copy of any findings and recommendations (paragraph 7(i))
- ensure that the procedure provides for written records to be kept of all complaints indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage, or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing (paragraph 7(j))
- ensure that the procedure provides that correspondence, statements and records of complaints are to be kept confidential (paragraph 7(k))

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

Inspection of funded nursery education

Effectiveness of the funded nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage and provide a varied curriculum, which includes specialist teaching in French, physical education and music. The current curriculum enables children to make steady progress in most areas of learning, with the exception of maths, communication, language and literacy, where some children make good progress. Planning overall, demonstrates that staff have an awareness of learning intentions which link to the six areas of learning. However, planning in the kindergarten classes does not consistently identify the next steps for individual children, or clearly show how teaching is adapted for those children with differing abilities. Assessment of children's progress is linked to the stepping stones and photographic evidence of children's achievements is recorded and kept in children's profiles.

Overall, children show a good level of personal and social skills and demonstrate a keen interest in learning. A structured routine is in place, which incorporates designated times for maths and literacy work, as well as some opportunities for free play. There is a strong emphasis towards promoting children's early literacy and numeracy skills and children follow a more structured approach when concentrating on sound and number activities, which includes the use of worksheets. However, the over use of worksheets during these and other times during the day, is not always a reliable method of teaching or meaningful to children. Specialist teaching in physical education helps children develop a range of skills that help them to negotiate and

move their bodies with ease. Although outdoor play is available to children at designated times twice a day, planning for this area of provision is insufficient and does not support a free flow environment. Children particularly enjoy musical activities and are eager to experiment with sounds and rhythm during music sessions. Four-year-old children in the reception classes are confident and competent when using computers to support their learning, however, this area of provision is not available to children attending the kindergarten.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Staff set realistic boundaries and expectations, which means that children behave well, cooperate and are kind and considerate towards one another. Children with special educational needs are supported well. Opportunities for children to explore and begin to understand other cultures and beliefs, are incidental and are not sufficiently woven into the curriculum, limiting children's knowledge and understanding of the wider community. In addition to this, there are few resources which reflect diversity available to children.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Established links between the home and school are in place and parents are made aware of what children are intended to learn. Comments from parents indicate that they are regularly informed about their child's progress and are involved in their child's learning via informal and formal discussions. Leadership and management is satisfactory. Systems to monitor and evaluate nursery provision are steadily developing and key issues from the previous inspection are still being implemented. Links with the local authority advisory team are yet to be firmly established and regular meetings are held with staff to discuss practice issues. Overall, the setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Recommendations or actions to improve the funded nursery education

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

- ensure planning clearly identifies next steps for individual children
- develop children's knowledge and understanding of the wider community
- ensure outdoor provision is sufficiently planned for.

School details

Name of school	St Christopher's The Hall School		
DCSF number	3056010		
Unique reference number	101687		
Unique reference number (funded nursery education)	EY240830		
Type of school	Nursery and Primary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1893		
Age range of pupils	3-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 124	Girls: 123	Total: 247
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 24	Girls: 24	Total: 48
Number of children receiving funded nursery education	Boys: 17	Girls: 13	Total: 30
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2100 - £6330		
Address of school	49 Bromley Road Beckenham Kent BR3 5PA		
Telephone number	0208650 2200		
Fax number	0208650 1031		
Email address	secretary@stchristophersthehall.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Velasco		
Proprietor	St Christopher's The Hall School Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Joanna Toulson		
Childcare inspector	Christine Davies		
Dates of inspection	5-6 February 2008		