

Herington House School

Independent school inspection report

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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 the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.¹

This was a light touch inspection which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Herington House School is an independent day school for boys and girls aged three-and-a-half to 11 years. There are currently 130 pupils on roll, 20 of whom receive government nursery funding. The school was founded in 1936 and has been run by the same family since 1972. It is located in purpose-built premises, which have been extensively extended with a further programme of improvements planned for 2010, 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 was last inspected in 2007 when it met all but one of the regulations for registration.

The school aims 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 provides a good quality of education and successfully meets its aims. The good teaching and curriculum, excellent relationships between staff and pupils and the high expectations that pupils will try their best to achieve their potential, ensure that pupils make good progress. Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding and arrangements for the safeguarding and care of pupils are good. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and provision ensures that children make a good start to their education. Most parents hold a very positive view of the school, making comments such as 'it is an excellent school...my child has benefitted enormously from attending...it is an extremely good school.' The school meets all but one of the regulations and has addressed successfully the issue raised at the last inspection, which related to training.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

Quality of education

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of the pupils. The curriculum in the Early Year Foundation Stage is good. The school teaches the full range of National Curriculum subjects with the addition of religious education (RE), French from Year 1 and German in Year 6. An outstanding feature is the emphasis on the creative arts with music a strong feature and a number of concerts for parents are performed each year. There are a large number of pupils having singing and instrumental lessons. The playing of early musical instruments is a new after school club and is proving very popular. Sport is given a high priority and pupils report that the sport element is lots of fun with good use of local facilities. Pupils who need additional help are well supported by experienced staff. While the curriculum provides strong focus on pupils' academic achievement with many gaining places at grammar and independent schools locally, their emotional and social development is also promoted effectively. The curriculum encourages pupils' good personal development through the personal, social, health and citizenship education programme (PSHE), ensuring that pupils are confident when facing new challenges on moving to their next school. This supports the school's aims of developing the whole child.

A range of visits outside school further enhances the curriculum. Pupils have recently visited the Museum of Childhood, the RAF museum and at the end of last term the whole school went to the pantomime at the local Civic Theatre. The older pupils have a residential visit to Menorca each year.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Staff plan their lessons well and the pace and content of lessons is good. They plan an appropriate range of activities to match the abilities of the pupils. There is an emphasis on teaching the basic subjects of mathematics, English and verbal reasoning to help prepare pupils for taking selective entrance examinations. The school makes good use of staff expertise to teach other subjects. The pupils respond by trying hard and concentrating, even when the task can be a little tedious. The staff know the pupils and their capabilities very well and use this information effectively during lessons to help them to plan their lessons and make good use of well targeted questioning. The pupils comment that they enjoy their lessons, with one saying 'all the children work really hard and the teachers help you', while another confirms that 'it is fun and the teachers look after us.' Resources for information and communication technology (ICT) have been extended and there are many displays of pupils' work, including ICT, celebrating achievement. The standard of creative writing on display is very impressive.

Assessment is regular and is used well to support teachers' planning. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and, following on from the recommendation in the last report, give pupils useful feedback on how to improve their work. The systems for tracking pupils' progress are good, these are based on the school's own examinations and standardised data on reading and spellings. The school has acknowledged that the

increased use of standardised data would enable them to extend the information on each pupil's progress, which they could then use to identify more effectively when a pupil needs additional help. Evidence from first-hand observation and scrutiny of the available attainment data shows that the vast majority of pupils are making consistently good progress, with some older pupils making outstanding progress. The older pupils all gain a place at the school of their choice and last year the whole group successfully gained places at selective grammar schools in the area. The school has improved the reports to parents and now includes more detail about what the pupils have learnt and what they need to do next to improve.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The school makes outstanding provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils and the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is a happy, friendly school where the pupils are encouraged to enjoy life. They play together happily, making comments such as 'it's great fun here...I love it...everyone is friendly.' They are proud of their school and their behaviour is outstanding. They are a credit to themselves and their parents who quite rightly confirm that they feel proud of their achievements both academically and socially. The school is a harmonious, respectful community with staff acting as positive role models. Older pupils are given an opportunity to take responsibility, act as head boy and girl and prefects. They take their roles very seriously and their willingness to help each other is impressive. There is a strong sense of belonging with parents being involved in the school, supporting a range of social and charity fund raising activities. The pupils' spiritual development is supported through the RE programme, where world religions are taught. Assemblies four times each week, which involve the celebration of pupils' achievements, help to boost the pupils' self-confidence and self esteem. The planned programme for PSHE is effective in promoting the pupils confidence. Pupils' attendance is good; they enjoy school and have very positive attitudes to learning. Their knowledge of themselves and their self-esteem and confidence are developed effectively. Pupils enjoy and participate enthusiastically in the full range of school activities, playing instruments, taking part in school productions and visiting local residents. They help to initiate and take part in a range of charity and fund-raising activities. Pupils' basic skills, including their personal skills, together with their awareness of public services and institutions, prepare them well for their future working lives. All pupils, including those from other cultures, are made welcome and made to feel valued as individuals. Racial harmony and tolerance are promoted very effectively.

Safeguarding pupils' Welfare, health and safety

Provision for safeguarding the welfare, health and safety of all the pupils, including the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, is good. The very friendly and caring ethos in the school ensures that all the pupils feel valued and safe. They report that there is no bullying and that staff care for them well. Procedures for safeguarding the pupils are good. The school has an appropriate policy and staff

have received training in line with current guidance. Thorough checks are completed prior to the appointment of all staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. This information is held on a single central register. There are careful plans for ensuring fire safety; fire drills are held regularly and recorded, fire-fighting equipment is checked annually and a fire risk assessment is in place. The school has a three-year plan for increasing accessibility, which meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. The pupils demonstrate an understanding of a healthy lifestyle and are encouraged to eat healthily and to take regular exercise. The school does not currently have facilities for pupils who are ill, which contains a washbasin with running hot and cold water.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage is effective in meeting the children's needs. They settle very quickly into Kindergarten because procedures are clear and expectations high. Staff are very welcoming and supportive so children feel safe, enjoy school and develop into happy learners. Planning and assessment are good. Teachers use their good knowledge of how young children learn to provide a good balance between activities directed by adults and those chosen by the children. The early skills needed for reading, writing and mathematics are taught well through specific input from the teacher and consolidated through a range of other activities. Children quickly learn the alphabet and the sounds that letters make because teaching is well structured and pronunciation clear. Children are eager to talk about what they are doing and are proud of their achievements. They continue to enjoy their learning in the Transition class and do well.

Throughout, teaching is good and effective assessment information is used to record the children's progress and plan the next steps in their learning. Staff work well as a team and are particularly effective in extending children's personal, social and emotional development, but the planning and assessment is not always consistent across both groups. Children develop good attitudes to school and behaviour and relationships are particularly good. They know how to keep themselves fit and healthy by running around and 'eating fruit and drinking not too much fizzy.' Whilst teachers plan opportunities for the children to work and play outside they have no dedicated outdoor area. The accommodation for the Transition class is cramped but staff make the most of the available space. The senior management team have recognised the need to address these issues and plans are in place to develop an Early Years Foundation Stage Unit during the next academic year. Leadership and management are good and recognised through the good progress that children make and the clear plans for improvement. By the time they enter Year 1, most children have exceeded the early learning goals.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

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

- Provide facilities for pupils who are ill which includes a washbasin (paragraph 5(l))

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:

- use standardised data to extend the information on each pupil's progress
- implement the plans to develop an Early Years Foundation Stage unit as planned with appropriate accommodation for learning both indoors and outside
- bring consistency of practice to the planning and assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		√		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		√		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		√		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		√		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	√			
The behaviour of pupils	√			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		√		
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How good are the outcomes for children in the EYFS?		√		
What is the quality of provision in the EYFS?		√		
How effectively is the EYFS led and managed?		√		
Overall effectiveness: how well does the school meet the needs of children in the EYFS?		√		

The quality of boarding provision *(leave blank if not applicable)*

Evaluation of boarding provision				
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School details

Name of school	Herington House School		
DCSF number	881/6024		
Unique reference number	115418		
Type of school	Preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1936		
Age range of pupils	3-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 40	Girls: 81	Total: 121
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 3	Girls: 6	Total: 9
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 8,670		
Address of school	1 Mount Avenue Hutton Mount Brentwood Essex CM13 2NS		
Telephone number	01277 211595		
Fax number	01277 200404		
Email address	principal@heringtonhouseschool.com		
Headteacher	Mr R Dudley-Cooke		
Proprietor	Herington House School Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton		
Dates of inspection	20 January 2010		