

# The Grey House School

Independent school standard 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 by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

The Grey House School is an independent day school for boys and girls from four to eleven years of age. The school was founded in Hook, Hampshire, and moved to Hartley Wintney in 1949. The proprietors are a partnership of the original founder's grandchildren and their father. The school is located in a large, detached house with additional buildings in the school grounds providing the Lower School, science/art room and school hall. A sports hall has recently been built to extend the sports facilities.

There are 126 pupils on the school roll, all of whom attend full time. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is delivered in the Kindergarten class, known as Form K. There are no children in receipt of funding for early years education. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Before-school care is available each day from 8.00am.

The school aims to provide 'first-class teaching within a happy, caring environment where children are encouraged to develop lively, enquiring minds, and to apply themselves eagerly to learning and the improvement of creative and physical skills'. The school prepares pupils for entry into independent and maintained secondary schools. This is the school's third Ofsted inspection; the last one took place in March 2009.

## **Evaluation of the school**

The Grey House School provides a good quality of education with outstanding promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and is successful in meeting its aims. All of the regulatory requirements are met. Strengths throughout the school include pupils' outstanding behaviour and the extensive curriculum which successfully extends pupils' learning and helps pupils develop very positive attitudes towards school. The promotion of pupils' welfare, health and safety is good, including safeguarding arrangements, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers know the pupils extremely well and have a very secure understanding of their different learning needs. As a result, all pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, make at least good progress and achieve well.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

## Quality of education

The curriculum provided by the school is outstanding. This includes the delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage where teachers make exceptional use of both the inside and outside environment to extend learning. As a result, the youngest pupils make excellent progress from their initial starting points. In Form K, children have excellent opportunities to develop key skills for learning, such as exploration, investigation and experimentation. This successfully inspires children and develops a real thirst for developing knowledge. Children showed excitement and real curiosity as they investigated the 'Form K Exploring Box' and closely examined resources such as mirrors, thermometers and timers.

Every opportunity is utilised within the Early Years Foundation Stage for children to benefit from fun, practical activities which successfully engage children's interests. For example, children develop excellent skills in adding on and undertaking simple calculation through an exemplary range of practical activities, both inside and outside. Children's literacy skills are extended particularly well as activities are presented creatively to capture their imagination. For example, on the day of inspection, children delighted in receiving many letters written to Form K from the Hungry Caterpillar, as part of their topic work. This successfully inspired children to write their own letters in response and develop a real interest in literacy activities. The curriculum for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is outstanding. Pupils' learning is consistently consolidated and enhanced through an exceptional range of visitors to the school and many outings. For example, Form 6 pupils take part in 'Enrichment Week' which involves bush craft trips, visits to places of interest, such as farms and museums, and visitors to the school. Themed weeks help pupils become thoroughly involved in an extensive range of carefully planned lessons and activities. As part of 'Olympics Week', pupils carried out independent research into the different countries taking part in the games and explored issues such as each country's climate, traditional dress and customs.

The school provides an extensive range of extra-curricular clubs and activities which the vast majority of pupils take part in. This includes judo, skiing, swimming, golf, craft, musical activities, drama and ballet. Frequent visitors to the school enhance pupils' learning through workshops and specialist activities. For example, pupils thoroughly enjoy theatre performances, a mobile farm, musical recitals and country dancing. Pupils' sporting achievements are particularly good, with school teams and pupils being successful in many local and national competitions.

Teaching and assessment are good. The majority of teaching throughout the school is good, with some examples of outstanding and a very small minority of satisfactory lessons. Pupils benefit from small numbers in class and very positive relationships with their teachers who know each pupil extremely well and support their individual needs effectively. As a result, all pupils achieve well and make good progress. The successful relationships developed with staff enable pupils to develop exceptionally positive attitudes towards learning. Inspectors noted pupils arriving happily and

enthusiastically for school each day. Many pupils stated in the questionnaire that 'learning is fun' and pupils 'love school'. These positive attitudes are reflected in lessons where pupils are highly engaged and motivated to try their best and achieve well.

Teachers use a good range of strategies to engage pupils effectively in their learning. For example, in a Form 6 English lesson, pupils developed extremely good persuasive writing skills in an imaginative exercise to oppose a factory being built on Hartley Wintney's cricket green. In a Form 3 mathematics lesson, pupils excitedly explored different ways of expressing fractions and were immensely absorbed in the activity due to the teacher's creative approach.

Assessment procedures throughout the school are variable. All pupils' work is presented well and shows good progress over time. However, some teachers use more effective strategies to help pupils improve their work by setting next steps and further improvement criteria. This is not implemented by all teachers. Tracking procedures are in place for all pupils and progress is monitored to ensure each pupil achieves well. However, procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of tracking systems are also variable. A new system has recently been implemented to address this, but it is too early at this stage to assess its effectiveness.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. All pupils are exceptionally polite and show excellent respect for others. Their behaviour is outstanding. Pupils have impeccable manners and spontaneously greet adults and their peers politely and courteously. Pupils' enjoyment of school is tangible and this is reflected in their excellent attendance. There is an atmosphere of fun and happiness throughout the school and all pupils consistently strive to achieve well. From Form K upwards, pupils enjoy assuming roles of responsibility and helping around the school. Pupils adopt the roles of form captains and older pupils carry out duties such as prefects, librarians and house captains. All pupils delight in achieving house points for good work and behaviour and there is a healthy competitive streak between the three school houses. Merit cups and trophies are awarded to celebrate pupils' success. The weekly 'Well Done Assembly' actively celebrates pupils' success, both in school and away from school.

Assemblies are used exceptionally well to promote pupils' understanding of tolerance of others and to develop a deeper awareness of different faiths, religions and cultural heritage. Music and drama provision throughout the school are excellent. Weekly religious education lessons, assemblies and links with the local church support pupils' spiritual development extremely well.

There are extensive opportunities for pupils to learn about the needs of others through topic work, fundraising and involvement in charity work. Pupils develop a strong awareness of public institutions in England through the curriculum and through visits to places of cultural interest, such as the National History Museum.

They regularly take part in local community events and represent the school in a range of competitions. Older pupils experience trips to the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, an otter and owl sanctuary and Finkley Down Farm. The youngest pupils in Form K recently visited a local bakery to help develop their awareness of the role of others and the community where they live.

Exceptional relationships are evident throughout the school and this ensures pupils develop high levels of self-esteem, self-belief and confidence to achieve. Pupils actively celebrate each other's success. For example, in a physical education lesson, Form 1 pupils spontaneously cheered on the pupils who were slower to run around the running track. Pupils work and play together harmoniously and this leads to a very happy, nurturing atmosphere throughout the school.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is good. This includes the Early Years Foundation Stage welfare requirements where all regulations are met. Robust policies and procedures are in place for safeguarding pupils and are assiduously followed by all staff. Effective risk assessments are carried out covering all areas of the premises and activities off site. This is an improvement since the last inspection. All staff regularly undertake child protection training and are confident in the procedures to follow if they have any concerns. Pupils are consistently supervised well throughout the school. Attendance records are maintained in full. Health and safety procedures are effective. The school consistently responds swiftly to any issues raised. Improvements have been made to comply with fire regulations since the last inspection and the fire risk assessment is waiting to be signed off by a relevant professional. Regular evacuation drills are carried out and staff and pupils are confident in the action to take in the event of an emergency.

Good attention is given towards supporting pupils' welfare. Staff are appropriately trained in first aid and clear procedures are in place to manage any accidents and emergency situations. There are no reported incidents of bullying and no exclusions. Behaviour policies are clear, consistently implemented and promote positive behaviour. Pupils understand what constitutes bullying and how they would seek help if they had concerns. Discussions and questionnaire responses showed that pupils are overwhelmingly positive about their experiences at school and that they feel safe and their views valued. Parents and carers were equally effusive and one parent expressed the view of many by describing the school as 'fabulous'.

The school's three-year access plan has recently been updated to meet the regulatory requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

The procedures for vetting staff and carrying out suitability checks meet all requirements. The school has a single central register which contains all the required information.

## **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The school's premises are maintained to a good standard and provide a safe and secure environment for pupils to work and play. The recent addition of the school's sports hall has made a significant improvement to the school's facilities and the range of sports and extra-curricular clubs available. Classrooms are generally well equipped and the gardens and playgrounds are used well to extend children's learning, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## **Provision of information**

The school provides helpful information for parents and carers, Ofsted and the Department of Education on request. There are regular opportunities for parents to receive information about their child's progress through termly reports and parents' meetings. The school operates a highly-effective open-door policy and the headteacher is particularly welcoming and accessible to all parents. The school's website is updated regularly and gives a clear indication of the school's policies and pupils' activities. The vast majority of the parent and carer questionnaires returned were overwhelmingly positive.

## **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The school's complaints procedure meets requirements.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

## **What the school could do to improve further**

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

- further develop and evaluate the new systems for monitoring assessment arrangements to show clearer evidence of the rate of progress of all pupils
- review marking arrangements throughout the school to ensure pupils consistently receive constructive feedback which helps them to improve their work.

## Inspection judgements

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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School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Preparatory School		
<b>Date school opened</b>	16 October 1949		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 78	Girls: 48	Total: 126
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£7149–£8730		
<b>Address of school</b>	The Grey House School Mount Pleasant Road Hartley Wintney Hook Hampshire RG27 8PW		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01252 842353		
<b>Email address</b>	schooloffice@grey-house.co.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs C Allen		
<b>Proprietors</b>	Miss O R McMonigall, Mr JG McMonigall and Mr JP McMonigall		

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



22 March 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of The Grey House School, Hartley Wintney RG27 8PW**

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed having the opportunity to talk with you and observing some of your lessons. You told us how much you enjoy school and are very enthusiastic in your learning. Many of you told us how safe and secure you find school and make friends easily. Your parents and carers agree, and a very large majority of them are also very pleased with the standards of education you receive. We found out that:

- children are very happy and settled in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Form K) and make excellent progress in their learning
- you all behave exceptionally well and develop very strong relationships with your friends and teachers. This has a very positive impact on your learning and your obvious enjoyment of school
- you make good progress in your learning as your teachers know you very well and support your individual needs in classes. However, we noted that some teachers have different ways of marking your work and helping you to further improve. We also noted that different teachers record your progress in various ways. There is a new system in place for tracking how quickly you learn, but this system is very new and it is therefore difficult to assess whether this is working or not yet
- your parents and carers say how much they appreciate the way in which the school helps you to enjoy your learning and to develop excellent skills which support your education
- the extensive range of extra-curricular clubs, outings and activities you participate in help to extend your learning and broaden your skills.

We talked with your headteacher about the small number of things that need to be improved and the staff will be working hard to make things even better for you.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Jo Caswell  
Her Majesty's Inspector