



Office for Standards  
in Education

## Silverhill School

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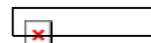
#### [SCHOOL DETAILS](#)

### INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

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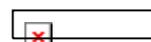
## Purpose and scope of the inspection



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This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 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



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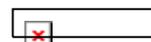
Silverhill School is a co-educational independent day school for pupils' aged two and a half to eleven years. It first opened in 1947 in Almondsbury and moved to its present site in 1992. The school is divided into three departments; Nursery (nursery and transition classes), Pre-Preparatory (reception, Years 1 and 2) and Preparatory (Years 3 to 6). Currently there are 237 pupils on roll. There is one pupil with a statement of special educational need.

Silverhill School is set in an attractive, self-contained, 10-acre site with sports pitches, tennis courts and play areas. The dining room, library and administrative offices are in the main building, Winterbourne House, which is Grade II\* listed. The coach house is used for classrooms. There is a range of additional buildings, which house specialist rooms for art, pottery, cookery, information and communication technology (ICT), science, music and French. There is a separate hall.

In the prospectus the school aim is as follows:

*'We believe in developing happy, busy and stimulated minds in a caring Christian environment with a wide range of activities both in and out of the classroom...emphasis is placed on academic progress.'*

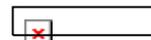
## Summary of main findings



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This is a successful school, which has many significant strengths. It helps pupils to progress very well and achieve high standards. Staff and pupils form a strong and cohesive community. Pupils are happy at the school and are encouraged to develop into well-mannered, confident young people. The school's success owes much to the calm and sympathetic leadership of the headteacher, the organisational ability of the administrative staff and the commitment and teamwork of the teachers and support staff.

## What the school does well:

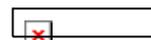


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- the quality of teaching is very good. The school makes effective use of staff expertise, and pupils make very good progress;
  - pupils achieve above the national average in English, mathematics and science and standards in Information, communication technology (ICT)

and French are a particular strength of the school;

- the curriculum is well planned and organised. It is supported by a good range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits;
- the headteacher provides approachable and effective leadership. All staff and pupils are committed to the school;
- the school successfully promotes courtesy and good manners among its pupils. Relationships are good at all levels; and
- it is a well-ordered and friendly community and has established a good partnership with parents.

#### **What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations:**

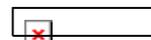


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Despite this very positive picture, there are a number of issues which the school must address in order to meet the regulations in full. These are:

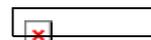
- develop written plans relating to the admission of pupils with a disability and improve access throughout the school;
- ensure that the appropriate checks are carried out on all staff by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB); and
- improve the standard of the premises and accommodation as set out in section 5 of this report,

#### **COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION.**



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##### **1. The quality of education provided by the school**



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##### **The quality of the curriculum**

The school provides a broad, balanced and interesting curriculum that covers all subjects of the National Curriculum and drama, music and French. The curriculum is designed to offer a range of experience within a secure setting. The school successfully achieves this. The Foundation Stage is

taught effectively in the Nursery department and the reception class. There is specialist teaching of French, games and music in Years 1 and 2. In the Preparatory department many subjects are taught by specialist staff. Each class has a tutor responsible for the pastoral care of its pupils.

There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities for pupils that enhance and extend the curriculum. The range of after-school clubs and activities includes sports, art, ICT and choir. The choir takes part in local festivals. There are regular educational visits planned to fit in with the curriculum, which are integrated well with the pupils' learning.

The curriculum for the pupils in the Nursery department is appropriately planned around the early learning goals of the Foundation Stage. The staff provide an effective, comprehensive and varied programme of activities appropriate for the age and stage of development of pupils. All staff work closely together. Pupils enjoy coming together for occasions such as assembly and also benefit from small group teaching.

The curriculum is well supported by a range of nationally and commercially produced schemes of work. Some year groups make good use of the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies. Collectively, the schemes enable teachers to identify clear lesson objectives and meet the individual needs of pupils. Planning of this quality enables pupils to make good progress as they move through the school.

### **The quality of teaching and assessment**

The quality of teaching is very good throughout the school. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Planning is clear and detailed, and reflects teachers' understanding of individual pupils' aptitudes and needs. Children understand what they have to learn and lessons include a good range of activities, which provide an appropriate level of challenge and support for all pupils. The best lessons have a definite beginning, middle and end, and pupils develop and apply new skills. Teachers make very good use of available resources and encourage pupils to work collaboratively so that they share and develop ideas and strategies, including the use of visual aids and story tapes. Lessons progress at a brisk pace and build effectively on pupils' previous learning. In a small minority of lessons there needs to be a more explicit teaching of unfamiliar vocabulary during the first part of the lesson. The specialist teaching and efficient use of class teachers' expertise helps pupils achieve very well.

In Years 1 and 2, staff plan and work well together, sharing numeracy and literacy lessons, enjoying the stimulation of teaching a larger group of pupils. This worked well in a Year 2 literacy lesson; pupils read for information and followed recipes, baking jam tarts successfully. Writing and reading standards are high with pupils taught good basic skills in reception, which are further developed during the next two years.

The quality of teaching in the Preparatory department is very good. All teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and an ability to motivate pupils, capturing and retaining their interest. The school has extended the range of teaching expertise with part-time staff teaching drama, games and music. The teaching of mathematics, science, history, French and ICT is very good.

The school provides effective support for pupils on the special educational needs (SEN) register and there is good provision for the pupil with a statement. However, there is a lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities of the SEN co-ordinator. Nevertheless, all pupils' with special needs make at least good progress. There is currently one pupil following a specialised computer program designed to support special needs pupils.

Relationships between adults and pupils in lessons are very good. On the whole pupils behave in a responsible manner. Many teachers use praise and encouragement effectively to help to develop pupils' confidence. A happy and positive atmosphere characterises most lessons.

Resources for teaching are generally sufficient, but some of the fiction books are old and worn. The supply of multicultural fiction and non-fiction books is satisfactory. The school has a very good ICT

suite where pupils learn how to use a wide range of software very competently. By Year 6 they know how to use spreadsheets and can produce colourful Power Point presentations which include a range of fonts, illustrations and animation. Pupils know how to save and retrieve their work; they can edit their writing and manipulate text by cutting and pasting. The school may wish to consider increasing the level of technical support and training for teachers to enable them to make more use of ICT across the curriculum.

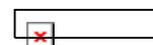
All teachers mark the pupils' work regularly and some provide helpful and encouraging comments. This enables pupils to improve their work. This could be usefully extended to all staff, in all subject areas. The school uses a range of mechanisms to assess pupils' achievements, through informal and standardised tests. The results of these are recorded on tracking sheets enabling pupils' progress to be closely monitored and their needs to be met in teachers planning. The Foundation Stage Profile is used effectively by the Nursery department. Parents receive mid-year and end-of-year progress reports.

By the end of the Preparatory stage standards of attainment in English, mathematics and science are above national averages. Each year some pupils are successful in gaining scholarships to independent secondary schools.

### ***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

## **2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**



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Overall, Silverhill provides well for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school's prospectus emphasises this aspect and this is reflected within lessons and assemblies. The school celebrates pupils' achievements well, which adds to the pupils' confidence and self-esteem.

Assemblies and religious education contribute effectively to pupils' spiritual development. Pupils discuss their own beliefs and values and explore those of the world faiths.

Provision for pupils' social development is good. There is a strong emphasis on appropriate behaviour and consideration for others. Pupils are very polite and greet adults and visitors confidently. They are encouraged to co-operate with one another and work well together. For example, in a very good history lesson pupils worked in pairs and discussed the benefits of people eating potatoes during the war as a good source of energy and vitamins. Pupils play team games and work well in groups. Lunch times provide valuable opportunities for their social development. This is greatly enhanced by staff eating lunch and talking informally with pupils, which contributes to the development of good relationships.

Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong and most parents feel the school helps their child to become more mature and to take responsibility. Pupils express their ideas and opinions clearly and coherently and develop their confidence. The active participation of pupils in fund raising for charitable organisations helps develop their awareness of the needs of others.

Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils learn about different countries and cultures in geography. Representatives from ethnic communities are invited into the school to extend pupils' awareness of other cultural traditions. Pupils enjoyed workshops on Indian dance and a talk about

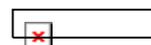
Chinese New Year and Hanukah.

There is limited coverage of personal, social and health education (PSHE) in some classes and this could usefully be extended throughout the school. Most teachers teach this area as part of science, games or 'circle' time. More often than not the latter is planned as and when the need arises, for example when teachers want to remind pupils about the importance of being kind and the need to share.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils**



Despite the poor quality of the accommodation, the school makes good provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils. There are clear and comprehensive policies in place, for example, on health and safety, first aid, attendance and child protection. The headteacher is identified as the designated member of staff for child protection and welfare issues. The school's policy on anti-bullying reflects its active commitment in this area. Pupils are confident that the school will deal with incidents of undesirable behaviour effectively. The school has a very good behaviour policy and pupils are clear about rewards, sanctions and punishments. Records are kept of any serious disciplinary matters and parents are involved at an early stage. The school actively promotes responsible behaviour and positive attitudes. As a result, the vast majority of pupils are well behaved and move around the school sensibly. The admissions and attendance registers meet all regulations.

In the main, staff are deployed to ensure the proper supervision of pupils. However, there are insufficient strategies in place to ensure a rapid response should an emergency arise in the older pupils' play area by the tennis courts.

The school keeps and monitors both accident and incident books and there are an appropriate number of qualified first aiders on the staff. The school has a satisfactory level of fire safety, identified by risk assessment. There are regular fire drills carried out and an appropriate log is kept. However, the school should undertake a full risk assessment of the premises with regard to pupils' health and safety.

There are currently no policies in place for the admission of pupils with a disability. In their present condition the premises do not enable access to all areas of the school.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

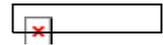
No.

***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- *undertake a thorough risk assessment of the premises with regard to pupils' health and safety (paragraph 3.4); and*
- *fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act.*

#### **4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff**



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The school is owned by Careernature Limited. The head teacher provides calm and sympathetic leadership. The school is well organised, runs smoothly and able staff work together as a committed team. The headteacher has a substantial teaching commitment, but allocates non-teaching time for administration, monitoring teaching and meeting parents. She is assisted by her husband, who works as a bursar and an efficient secretary.

The school has generally good procedures for the recruitment of suitable teaching and non-teaching staff. References are taken up and enquiries made about their medical fitness and their previous employment history. Checks on all but one of the staff have been carried out through the CRB at an appropriate level. A check on a visiting member of staff who teaches for one session a week has yet to be carried out.

#### ***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

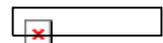
*The school complies with most of the requirements but there is one exception.*

#### ***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- *ensure that all staff are checked with the CRB to confirm their suitability to work with children prior to their appointment (paragraph 4b).*

#### **5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation**



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The school is set in an attractive 10-acre walled site where there are paved play areas, sports pitches, tennis courts and grassland. The school has been advised of security concerns on the site. The main school building, Winterbourne House, is an eighteenth century Grade II\* listed building. The house is used for administration and includes the kitchen and dining areas, rooms for specialist teaching and for after-hours care. It is in need of urgent repair and refurbishment. It is generally unsuitable for use as a school building as it has narrow passageways, hazardous steep stairs and many different levels. The Coach House is used for classrooms, changing rooms and some

a World War 2 Nissan hut which is in need of replacement; it is damp, unhygienic and poorly decorated.

The block used by preparatory pupils is a cob-built cottage, which, although it has been extensively altered has some areas which are damp with limited natural light. The ICT room is adapted from an old carport but provides adequate accommodation. There are some additional buildings, used only for storage, which are beyond repair. Most of the school buildings suffer from damp penetration. This leads to serious problems in maintaining the standard of decoration. Ventilation is poor, some lighting is inadequate; standards of hygiene are compromised by the poor quality of the main fabric of the buildings and areas of flooring are in urgent need of repair. Some classrooms present the school with a significant challenge to maintain the standards of teaching.

The Directors of Careernature are endeavouring to maintain the building used by the nursery and transition pupils in an acceptable state of repair but are finding it increasingly difficult. There are plans for substantial up-grading of the accommodation, but these are contingent on a planning application, not yet submitted.

### ***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

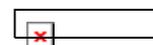
No.

### ***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- *provide adequate security arrangements for the site (paragraph 5d);*
- *ensure that all the buildings provide reasonable resistance to damp (paragraph 5f);*
- *ensure that all classrooms allow for effective teaching and do not compromise pupils' health and safety (paragraph 5j);*
- *maintain all parts of the school in an hygienic state (paragraph 5n);*
- **improve** *lighting and ventilation to a satisfactory standard (paragraph 5p);*
- *maintain and decorate the premises to a satisfactory standard (paragraph 5g); and*
- *ensure that there is appropriate flooring in good condition (paragraph 5s).*

## **6. The quality of information for parents and other partners**



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The school communicates well with parents. There is a clear and informative prospectus, regular newsletters from the school and from the Friends of Silverhill School (F.O.S.S.). The head teacher communicates frequently with parents and there is a helpful and informative notice board.

A high proportion of parents responded to the questionnaire sent out to them before the inspection. They showed very high levels of satisfaction with nearly all aspects of the school. For example, around 95 per cent agree that their child makes good progress at the school, that pupils behave well in school and that teaching is good.

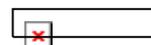
Parents are given two reports each year and are invited to come to the school to discuss their child's progress with the teachers. The school lives up to its statement in its prospectus that `we

*believe that the education of a child is a partnership between school and home'. Parents are welcome to make contact with the school at any time if they have concerns.*

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints**



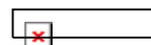
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The school has a clear and effective policy for handling complaints, which is shared with parents and meets all requirements.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**SCHOOL DETAILS**



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Name of school:	Silverhill School
Type of school:	Day
DfES ref.no.	803/6002
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	2.5 to 11 years
Number on roll:	237
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Fees:	£3405 - £4635
Address of school:	Winterbourne House, Swan Lane Winterbourne Bristol. BS36 1RL
Email address:	<a href="mailto:silverhill@btconnect.com">silverhill@btconnect.com</a>
Telephone number:	01454 772156
Fax number:	01454 772156
Headteacher:	Mrs Cathryn Phillipson-Masters
Proprietor:	Careernature Limited
Reporting Inspector:	Jill Bainton
Dates of Inspection:	17 - 20 November 2003

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