

# **Inspection report**

## **The Grey House School**

**Independent school**

**DfES ref no: 850/6029**

**Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002**

**Dates of inspection: 20 - 23 March 2006**

## **INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY**

### **Purpose and scope of the inspection**

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 162A 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**

The Grey House School is a day school for pupils aged 4 to 11, which was founded in 1949. The present proprietors are a partnership of the original founder's grandchildren and their father. There are currently 147 pupils attending the school, with 10 pupils below statutory school age funded under the Nursery Scheme. The school occupies a pleasant site in the village of Hartley Wintney, Hampshire. The school serves a wide geographical area. The present headmistress took up her position in 2005, after serving on the staff for 11 years.

The school is non-selective and at present has 15 pupils it has identified as having special educational needs. The majority of pupils sit school entrance examinations, including the Common Entrance Examination, and go on to selective independent secondary schools. Pupils also take the national Standard Attainment Tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6.

The school is organised into seven classes and all pupils, including the youngest, attend full-time. The school also provides day care for some pupils.

The stated aim of the school is *'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'*.

### **Summary of main findings**

This is a good school with a number of outstanding features. It is very well led by the headmistress who, together with the staff, has created a safe, happy and caring school community. The pupils enjoy their education very much and their personal development is very good. They achieve high standards in their work and all pupils, whatever their ability, make good progress in their learning. Teaching is good overall and is occasionally outstanding. The curriculum is broad and well balanced, and provision and teaching for the youngest pupils is very good. The school is successful in preparing pupils to go on confidently to the next phase of their education.

### **What the school does well:**

- it ensures that pupils' behaviour is very good;
- it encourages pupils to be healthy and take regular exercise;

- its pupils really enjoy the school and their lessons;
- it successfully encourages pupils to make a positive contribution to the community; and
- it is very good at developing pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills.

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

The school complies with all the regulations.

**Next Steps**

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

- as identified in the school's development plan, continue to improve the quality of schemes of work so that they form an integrated whole-school curriculum plan with clear links between subject content, coverage, learning objectives and key skills; and
- further refine assessment systems so that there is greater consistency in practice between classes and subjects.

# **COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION**

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

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

The Grey House School provides a good curriculum for its pupils. It offers a broad range of subjects with a good balance of time given to each. The curriculum provides pupils with good support for their academic, physical and personal development. There is a good emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Schemes of work are satisfactory, although some are quite brief and only describe the subject matter to be covered. Planning is adequate in individual subjects, but in the absence of a whole-school curriculum plan, there is a lack of cohesion between different strands of the curriculum. Staff use their expertise in different subjects effectively to provide specialist teaching in most subjects in Key Stage 2 and subject matter is generally well matched to the ages and aptitudes of the pupils. As a result, nearly all pupils achieve high standards by the time they leave the school.

Good provision is made for pupils with learning difficulties. The school gives regard to the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice, and has a detailed policy with useful guidance for staff. There are no pupils with a statement of SEN. Provision for pupils in the Foundation Stage is very good. Planning takes account of the areas of learning for these pupils and the activities offered ensure that all make good progress. The majority exceed the early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1.

The curriculum is enhanced by a very good range of extra-curricular activities. These include visits to places of interest, residential trips and lunchtime and after-school clubs. Pupils profit from the use of the local environment and services, such as the police and the fire service. Pupils are actively encouraged to take regular vigorous exercise and they frequently compete in local cross-country meets and other sporting events.

Although the school does not have specific lessons for personal, social and health education, these aspects of the curriculum are covered very effectively through other subjects and assemblies. Pupils are well aware of the dangers of drugs and unhealthy lifestyles. The science curriculum covers sex education very effectively and pupils are encouraged to think about their relationships with others in religious education lessons. The school's caring Christian ethos engenders in pupils a concern for others and this is further developed by pupils' involvement in a wide range of charity events and projects, such as the 'Race for Life'.

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

The quality of teaching is good, with some outstanding lessons. Teachers place a strong emphasis on technical accuracy in literacy and numeracy and as a result pupils achieve standards which are generally well above the average for their age. Pupils demonstrate progress in individual lessons and over time. They are consistently engaged in their work. They have a high level of interest in the content and activities of the lessons. Pupils are consistently challenged intellectually and their individual contributions to lessons show a determination to respond appropriately and accurately. Much of the work is organised in ways which require pupils to think for themselves and to work out answers individually. They apply creative effort to a high standard, for example, in art and music where the outcomes are often very good.

Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. The quality of teachers' written lesson planning varies from very good to satisfactory. In the best practice, clear objectives are identified and communicated to pupils and activities are appropriate to fulfil the objectives. Time is used well and in the most effective lessons pupils have a clear understanding of the time available to complete tasks and respond positively. Teachers have a good knowledge of pupils and their strengths and weaknesses, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Teachers are effective in encouraging pupils to behave responsibly. The needs of a small number of pupils with behavioural difficulties have been identified clearly and are handled sensitively by teachers. The quality of relationships between teachers and pupils makes a major contribution to behaviour; pupils like and respect their teachers and respond accordingly.

Marking of pupils' work is regular and thorough. In the best practice teachers give extensive written feedback which identifies areas for improvement in language appropriate for pupils. In Key Stage 1, a pupil assessment record is maintained, matched to National Curriculum attainment levels, which provides teachers with an effective overview of pupils' strengths and areas for development in individual subjects. In Key Stage 2, whilst individual teachers have a good understanding of pupils' achievements in the subjects they teach, there is no central mechanism for recording attainment across the full range of subjects. In a minority of lessons teachers' planning takes further account of individual needs with adapted or additional learning activities. Pupils with specific SEN are well catered for by additional adult support in the classroom.

Resources are available in sufficient numbers and quality. There is a particularly good range of books available with a good library and supplementary texts in many rooms. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support and extend learning in lessons is less extensive.

A number of standardised tests are used to assess performance and a comprehensive assessment of performance is produced in Year 6 to support the transfer of pupils to secondary schools. An evaluation of performance is carried out annually, largely assessing the extent to which pupils have gained access to appropriate schools of their choice.

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

Yes.

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

The school's Christian ethos and warm family atmosphere is evident in all that it does. The headmistress and her staff have successfully created a very friendly and purposeful school. Parents say that their children really enjoy coming to school and the pupils themselves endorse this.

The provision for the spiritual, moral and social development of pupils is good. Pupils are self-confident and have high levels of self-esteem. This is reflected in the ability of pupils to participate with enthusiasm in regular performances in front of a large audience. Pupils sing and act with confidence and standards are high.

Provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development is good. Pupils take part in assemblies, where they sing well and join in appropriate prayers. Assemblies are used effectively to celebrate the personal, academic, creative and musical skills of pupils. Moral guidance for pupils is strong and there is a clear behaviour policy. The vast majority of pupils demonstrate that they have a proper sense of right and wrong. They look after their own property and respect that of others. Pupils behave very well in classrooms, around the building and outside in the playgrounds.

Pupils' social development is good. They mix well with each other and play happily together. The good emphasis on speaking and listening helps pupils develop good skills of co-operation and prepares them effectively for the next stage of their education. Opportunities for pupils to work together in teams and to socialise are provided through regular residential visits and the many sporting and community events.

Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Music lessons and events make an exceptionally good contribution to their cultural development and standards are high. Pupils have a good understanding of British culture, for example through their studies in geography and art. They are also developing an idea of other cultures, both contemporary and historical. Pupils study world religions and traditions in religious education. They also study other cultures in geography and the school makes good use of pupils' holiday travels to reinforce their understanding of the wider world. It is evident that tolerance of others is a very important part of the school's ethos.

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

Yes.

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

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is very good, with some outstanding features. A comprehensive range of policies addresses all aspects of pupils' welfare. Effective management has ensured that procedures for

safeguarding pupils are comprehensive and monitored appropriately. Pupils are well supervised and encouraged to support each other in a number of practical ways. Comprehensive risk assessments, including those for visits off site, are well documented and accessible.

Pupils report that they do not experience bullying in the school and that any matters of concern are handled sensitively and promptly by their teachers. The school's behaviour policy is implemented consistently and pupils understand what is expected of them. The small number of incidents requiring sanctions is carefully recorded and parents are kept appropriately informed. Parents believe that the school treats their children fairly and with respect and that expectations of good behaviour are high. A number of members of staff have First Aid qualifications and arrangements for dealing with medical incidents are well documented and appropriate. A development plan for improving access to the building is in place.

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

Yes.

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

Appropriate Criminal Records Bureau checks have been carried out on all recently appointed staff and the proprietors of the school. The school has taken effective steps to ensure that all members of staff are suitable persons to be working with children.

The school has an appropriate recruitment policy and checks are made to confirm the identity, medical fitness, previous employment history and qualifications of prospective staff. References are sought and the information gained is taken into account before confirming appointments. Induction procedures for newly appointed staff are good.

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

Yes.

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

The accommodation is of a good standard and very well maintained. The classrooms for the junior pupils are in the main Edwardian house, whilst the infant and kindergarten pupils are in a single-storey building in the grounds. Some classrooms in the main building are rather cramped but this does not impede safety or the effectiveness of teaching and learning. All areas of the school are decorated to a high standard and further enhanced by the effective display of pupils' work in both classrooms and circulation areas. Movement between buildings is across well-maintained hard surfaces and all pupils have access to adequate toilet and washroom arrangements. Facilities for the teaching of science, art, music and ICT provide additional spaces to enhance the curriculum.

Well-kept gardens and lawns surround the school buildings. The grounds of the school are maintained to a very high standard and are used very effectively for a range of physical education activities.

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

Yes.

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

The quality of information provided to parents is very good. There is an appropriate range of information about pupils' academic and social progress, and about the wider scope of opportunities at the school. The school prospectus is informative and contains details of curricular provision and additional activities. Copies of school policies are available to parents on request.

Parents' meetings are held regularly, and a report on pupils' progress in all academic subjects is sent to parents at the end of the school year. Shorter progress reports are issued termly. The majority of parents are very happy with the information they receive from the school, although a small minority would like more frequent progress reports.

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

Yes.

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

The school has a comprehensive complaints policy. The complaints procedure includes appropriate formal and informal stages for the resolution of concerns, together with an appeals stage with a panel including an independent representative. Clear time-scales are set out for each stage. A copy of the policy has recently been provided for all parents and carers and further copies are available on request.

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

Yes.



## SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	The Grey House School
DfES Number:	850/6029
Type of school:	Preparatory
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 90    Girls: 57    Total: 147
Annual fees (day pupils):	£5,412 - £6,663
Address of school:	Mount Pleasant Hartley Wintney Hampshire RG27 8PW
Telephone number:	01252 842353
Fax number:	01252 845527
Email address:	schooloffice@grey-house.co.uk
Headteacher:	Mrs C E Allen
Proprietors:	O R, J G & J P McMonigall
Reporting Inspector:	Mr S J Dennett
Date of inspection:	20 - 23 March 2006

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