

# The Shrubbery 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 Shrubbery is a day school on the outskirts of Sutton Coldfield, near to the city of Birmingham. It admits boys and girls from three to 11 years of age. There are currently 237 pupils on roll and none of these have a statement of special educational needs. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is made in a nursery class, a pre-school reception class and three small reception classes. There are currently 70 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, of whom 60 are in receipt of nursery education funding. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds including White British, Asian and African families. The school opened in 1930 and is located in a fully converted, listed, two-storey Georgian house. To the rear of the main school building is a range of additional classrooms, playgrounds, and a small playing field. The school is owned by the two proprietors and does not have a governing body. The school aims to 'provide a happy and caring environment in which all children are encouraged to reach their full potential.' The school was last inspected in 2008.

## Evaluation of the school

The Shrubbery provides a good quality of education for the pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 and in the Early Years Foundation Stage for children aged from three to five years. The school is very successful in meeting its stated aims; parents and carers typically comment, 'My child is thriving in this caring school.' The curriculum and the quality of teaching and assessment are good, and as a result, the progress made by pupils is good. Pupils' behaviour is good as is the school's provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils are good and safeguarding requirements are fully met. The school has acted well on the recommendations of the last report and now meets all of the requirements for registration.

## Quality of education

The curriculum is good. It takes account of National Curriculum expectations and there is a good balance between academic, creative and aesthetic subjects. Pupils have regular opportunities to take part in a wide range of enrichment activities

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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).

including sports, languages, music, knitting and speech and drama. Parents and carers report that they are pleased with the range of activities on offer but would appreciate more enrichment activities for the younger pupils. The inspection team agrees with these views. The curriculum is enhanced by specialist teaching for French, physical education, and information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils identified as having disabilities or with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English are well supported by the curriculum. Staff know their pupils very well and tailor learning experiences to meet their individual needs.

The provision for basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics is good and is given a high priority across the school. As a result, pupils make good progress and achieve standards that are above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2. Individual teachers have clearly constructed curriculum plans in place for each year group and subject. The school has recently updated the strategic overview of the curriculum provision across the school in order to ensure continuity and progression. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum is taught as a discrete subject and is well integrated into all aspects of school life, such as through assemblies, visiting speakers and special events. As a result, pupils have a secure understanding of how to keep healthy and safe and have many opportunities for personal development. Pupils have regular opportunities to contribute to the school community. For example, there are two school councils, specifically for those pupils in Key Stage 1 and in Key Stage 2. In addition, there are many opportunities to represent the school at local sporting events. Those pupils who are preparing for entrance examinations are offered appropriate tuition.

The curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. It has an effective balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities and covers all the areas of learning in both indoor and outdoor activities. Resources are of good quality and appropriate to the needs and interests of young children. For example, during the inspection, children were observed fully engaged in planting seeds and finding out what plants needed in order to grow.

The quality of teaching and assessment across the school is good. Lessons are clearly planned with appropriate activities for different abilities. In the best lessons observed, teachers have secure subject knowledge, high expectations and provide challenging and interesting tasks. For example, pupils in Year 3 were thoroughly engaged in learning about different types of rocks and their uses. Pupils report that they enjoy coming to school and one typically explained, 'I really like it here, they push you to do better.' Relationships in lessons are positive and teachers take every opportunity to develop pupils' personal skills such as cooperation, respect and consideration for others. In a few lessons, teachers talk for too long and pupils do not get on to the task quickly enough. Reading skills such as phonics, the sounds that letters make, are systematically taught but opportunities are sometimes missed to reinforce these skills across the curriculum. Pupils are given regular opportunities to make links between different subjects and to apply their problem-solving skills.

There are well-structured systems in place for tracking pupils' progress. The school uses standardised tests and assessments to regularly check pupils' progress and uses an external agency to mark Year 6 national test papers. Teachers use data from assessment to plan work and to check that pupils are on track. Work is regularly marked with positive comments. In the best examples, pupils are provided with written guidance to help them improve further, but this is not yet consistent across the school.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the high adult ratios and good continuous assessment enable staff to know children well and understand their needs. Adults promote speaking and listening skills well by engaging children in play and by asking open-ended questions. Good leadership and management ensure that children make good progress as they move through the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Attainment on entry to the nursery class is variable but broadly in line with expectations for this age. Good teaching both in the Early Years Foundation Stage and across the school, alongside caring support and guidance contribute to pupils' good progress. A good proportion of pupils in Year 6 gain places at local grammar schools or selective secondary schools of their choice. Those pupils identified as disabled or with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English make similar progress to their peers. This is because the small class sizes enable teachers to get to know their pupils very well and anyone at risk of falling behind is quickly identified and provided with support. Parents and carers comment positively on the progress their children are making, not only in their academic development but also in their confidence and self-esteem.

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

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is consistently good and this makes a strong contribution to the friendly, calm and orderly atmosphere. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their high levels of attendance. Personal development is a strength because all staff successfully nurture the abilities of each pupil. Parents and carers typically comment, 'The staff understand my child very well.' Pupils are proud of their school and report that they enjoy coming to school because they have many friends. Pupils are confident, well-mannered and welcoming to visitors. All pupils are encouraged to develop a strong sense of school community and daily collective acts of worship engender a clear sense of spirituality across the school. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and they have a secure understanding of their own cultures and faiths and get on very well together. The good curriculum provides regular opportunities for pupils to learn about different faiths and cultures and the PHSE programme contributes positively to pupils' knowledge of being a good citizen and the role of public organisations in England. A visit to the school by the local Member of Parliament and the election of school council members and house captains enhance pupils' understanding of democracy. Above average attainment at the end of Year 6, coupled with good personal skills, ensure that pupils are well prepared for moving on to the next stage of their education.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children form positive relationships with adults and with each other. In class, children take turns to speak and happily share toys. Children are encouraged to tidy up and to clear away their trays and cutlery after lunch. In lessons, children behave well and some can sustain their concentration for a good period of time.

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

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. The school has acted well on the recommendations from the previous inspection and this aspect of the school's work has improved. Class sizes are small and good staffing levels ensure that pupils are well supervised at all times. Staff recruitment procedures follow national guidance and all staff have received appropriate child protection training. The headteacher has attended a higher level course on safeguarding for school managers and safer recruitment training. The safeguarding policy fully meets the requirements of the regulation. Detailed attention is given to health and safety through regular fire drills, checks on equipment and suitable risk assessments for off-site visits. The first aid policy meets requirements and a good number of staff are appropriately trained in first aid, including those responsible for the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils report that they feel safe and secure in school and any worries or concerns are quickly dealt with by staff. Pupils benefit from visits to the school from the local fire and ambulance services and local police officers. These visits enhance pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe. One pupil typically commented, 'The visit from the police was great, and they told you what would happen if you steal things.' Parents and carers report that their children are kept safe by the school. In addition, parents and carers work closely with the school to promote the pupils' safety. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily and take regular exercise through the wide range of sports clubs, physical education lessons and regular swimming lessons. Parents and carers report that they are pleased the school has responded to their request to provide hot meals at lunchtime. The school has devised a three-year accessibility plan, which ensures it fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

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

The school complies fully with the regulations in respect of the checks made on prospective employees, including Criminal Records Bureau checks on their suitability to work with children. The details of these checks, together with those made on the existing staff and the proprietors, are accurately recorded in the required single central register.

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

The school is located in a suitably converted listed two-storey Georgian house and a number of additional buildings to the rear of the school. A number of small classrooms, offices, a library area and role play area are located in the main building.

The remaining classrooms, hall, information and communication technology suite, further library area and the Early Years Foundation Stage classrooms are located in a variety of suitable buildings to the rear of the school. Two hard-surfaced playgrounds, a small garden area, a playing field and separate playing areas for the Early Years Foundation Stage provide a good space for pupils to play safely outside. Classrooms are varied in size and appropriate for the small class sizes.

### **Provision of information**

The school has established good links with parents and carers and they are kept well-informed about their children's progress through regular written reports, informal meetings and telephone discussions. All the required information is provided for parents and carers of current pupils and prospective pupils, and others. Parents and carers report that they particularly appreciate the newly introduced text messaging service and half-termly newsletters. The annual reports are comprehensive and include a helpful summary of progress and attainment in the key areas of learning.

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

The school has a clear and fair complaints procedure which meets all of the requirements of the regulations.

### **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:

- ensure that the marking of pupils' work consistently provides them with information about how to improve and how well they are progressing towards their targets
- provide regular opportunities to reinforce phonics, the sounds that letters make, across the curriculum
- provide more opportunities for younger pupils to participate in enrichment activities.

## 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>	Day School		
<b>Date school opened</b>	1930		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 115	Girls: 104	Total: 219
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 6	Girls: 6	Total: 12
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	Up to £6,366		
<b>Address of school</b>	Walmley Ash Road Sutton Coldfield B76 1HY		
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 351 1582		
<b>Email address</b>	info@shrubbery.bham.sch.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Hilary Cook		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Paul Terry Eric Allen		

**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.**



8 March 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of The Shrubbery School, Sutton Coldfield B76 1HY**

I am writing to thank you for the help you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with those of you we met and watching you work hard in your lessons. You told us that you were happy at The Shrubbery and we see this is the case in the friendly way you all work and play together. We found that The Shrubbery is a good school and that your behaviour in lessons, around the school and at lunchtimes and break times is good. Well done. Your teachers know you all very well and make your lessons interesting and expect you to work hard. You make good progress in your lessons and leave the school in Year 6 with standards that are above average. We could see that you know a lot about how to keep healthy and safe and many of you enjoy lovely hot cooked lunches.

Thank you for completing our questionnaire. You told us that you enjoyed coming to school, had many friends, felt safe and were well looked after by the staff. You also told us that you would like more computers and we have passed this information to your headteacher. We have also asked your headteacher and staff to ensure that you are given regular feedback on how to improve your work and information about how well you are progressing towards your targets, to make sure that you practice phonics, the sounds that letters make, in subjects other than English and that younger pupils have more opportunities to take part in lunchtime and after-school clubs and activities.

You can all help the school by making sure you keep up your high rates of attendance and continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Marian Harker  
Her Majesty's Inspector