

The Shrubbery School

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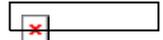
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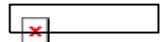
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Introduction and summary

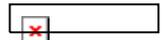


Purpose and scope of the inspection



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.

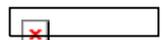
Information about the school



The Shrubby School is an independent day school. It caters for boys and girls aged three to eleven. The school is set in pleasant surroundings in the leafy suburb of Sutton Coldfield. It occupies a converted Georgian house and other buildings in its own grounds. There are 258 full-time and seven part-time pupils. There are 32 pupils in the nursery and 12 in the pre-school class. Sixty-two pupils are funded under the nursery grant scheme. Prospective parents and their children attend an interview with the headteacher before being offered a place.

The school is proud of its traditional approach to education and aims to promote learning which is valued and enjoyable. The mission statement highlights the school's commitment to 'providing a happy and caring environment in which all children are encouraged to reach their full potential.'

Summary of main findings



The Shrubbery School is a good school. Pupils achieve well and grow into confident and responsible young people. It is a friendly community where pupils are happy, respected and well cared for. The curriculum provision and the quality of teaching are good. The headteacher provides committed leadership and this has enabled the school to develop and progress over the last three years. Parents hold the school in high regard and support the principles which it promotes. The school is well placed to address the few regulatory requirements that it does not currently meet.

What the school does well

- teachers know their pupils well and establish very good relationships with them;
- the curriculum in the nursery provides pupils with a very good start to their education;
- the development of pupils' speaking, listening, reading and numeracy skills is very good; and
- the high standards of pupils' behaviour are underpinned by their very good social and moral development.

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

- update its anti-bullying policy;
- ensure that appropriate checks on the medical fitness of all staff are carried out prior to their appointment; and
- provide further information to parents as detailed in section 6 of this report.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and provides opportunities for pupils to learn effectively and to make good progress. Particular strengths of the school are its nursery provision and the curriculum for literacy and numeracy.

The curriculum for the lower infants provides a very good link and transition between the early learning goals and the National Curriculum. The pupils in the infants and juniors are taught all of the subjects in the National Curriculum. Furthermore, all pupils benefit from specialist teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) and, in the juniors, they receive specialist teaching for physical education (PE) and French. There is also provision for the individual tuition of music.

The school has made effective use of national guidance in drawing up subject policies and schemes of work, including documents from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. These provide helpful guidance to teachers and promote progression and continuity in pupils' learning as they progress through the school. The school's curriculum documents underpin the provision for pupils' linguistic, mathematical, social, creative, aesthetic and physical development. The headteacher and deputy headteacher monitor teachers' planning carefully to ensure that the schemes of work and policies are being implemented effectively.

The content of the curriculum is tailored appropriately to meet the individual needs and aptitudes of all pupils, including those with special educational needs (SEN). Although the school makes appropriate provision for the one pupil with a statement, it has not yet received funding from the Local Educational Authority (LEA).

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is covered within other subject areas, for example in science, PE and religious education (RE). In science, for example, pupils learn about healthy eating, the impact of poor dental hygiene, and how to be safe in the sun. During their PE lessons, they learn to appreciate how exercise contributes to a healthy lifestyle. In RE, they learn the importance of respecting the traditions, values and beliefs of people whose cultures are different from their own.

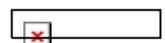
The school makes good provision for pupils who are below compulsory school age. They experience a broad range of exciting opportunities, which help to foster a positive and enthusiastic attitude to learning. They are encouraged to experiment and try new experiences and activities. A good example is pupils' development of basic ICT skills through their exploration of software, which complements the development of their hand and eye co-ordination. The nursery staff provide very good care and support for pupils. They engage purposefully with them during the full range of activities provided. This enables pupils to grow in confidence as they develop a greater awareness of themselves and others.

Pupils are frequently encouraged to take on responsibilities from an early age. They readily assist their teachers and peers with tasks around the school and during lessons. Junior pupils act as monitors and they are helpful to younger pupils throughout the day. Pupils in the juniors are elected to act as representatives for their class on the school council.

School trips and visitors to the school are used purposefully to enrich the curriculum. Pupils benefit from annual visits by a theatre company, the animal rescue service and local authors. The recent trip by older pupils to New Hall Mill helped to reinforce their knowledge and understanding of life in Victorian Britain. These pupils participate in a residential weekend, which enables them to experience outdoor and adventurous activities as well as additional ICT. Pupils in the infants also enjoy a good range of educational visits, including trips to a local farm, Hatton Country World and to historical places of interest.

Pupils value the range of extra-curricular activities. They commented on how enjoyable and helpful they find the speech and drama lessons. These activities enhance the development of pupils' confidence and self-esteem and the school has a successful record of sporting achievements.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



The overall quality of teaching is good and there is teaching which demonstrates exemplary practice in all phases. However, the quality of teaching is not always of a consistently high standard. Pupils enjoy acquiring new knowledge and are keen to offer ideas and suggestions. They make good progress and achieve well during their time at the school, as shown by the high number of grammar school places taken up when they leave.

Teachers know their pupils well and quickly establish very good relationships with them. They expect their pupils to behave well and work conscientiously. All teachers encourage pupils to recall and build on what they have learnt in previous lessons. Teaching makes helpful links between subjects, which helps to make learning meaningful and purposeful.

In the best lessons, teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge and an understanding of the different ways in which pupils learn. They enthuse and motivate pupils by making creative use of resources and maintaining an appropriate level of pace and challenge. There are good opportunities for pupils to share ideas and to review and improve their work. As a result, pupils make very good progress in these lessons.

A numeracy lesson in the infants provided an example of very good teaching. The teacher inspired pupils by demonstrating how to add numbers up to ten using visual images, different shapes and a number line. Pupils enjoyed their active participation in both the introduction and main part of the lesson. They took turns to come up to the board to show how they counted on from a given number and explain their answers. The explicit teaching and display of key words enabled pupils to make correct use of mathematical vocabulary throughout the lesson. The teacher assessed pupils' levels of understanding and progress continually and this enabled her to provide a very good level of challenge for all pupils. The highest attaining pupils were able to identify the different properties of two-dimensional shapes, which they used to help them to add and count in sequence up to ten.

Where teaching is less successful there is a lack of clarity about learning objectives. The assessment of pupils' prior attainment and need is not sufficiently reflected in the teachers' planning or during the course of lessons. As a result, there is insufficient challenge for some pupils and the overall pace is slow.

The teachers in each year group plan their work together and share ideas. This helps to ensure that pupils are given similar curricular opportunities. There is strong emphasis placed on pupils' acquisition of linguistic and mathematical skills. Basic literacy and numeracy skills are secured at an early age and these continue to develop well as pupils progress through the school. Teachers aim to make learning meaningful and enjoyable by providing practical and creative activities where possible.

Homework is used effectively to reinforce pupils' learning. Even the youngest pupils take home books to share and enjoy with their parents. The school has a range of good quality, well-organised resources to support their learning across the curriculum. However, some of the library books are in need of replacement and there is a limited range of multi-cultural fiction books. Good use is made of specialist teaching in music, ICT, drama, French and PE. There are bright and colourful displays of pupils' work which contribute to the celebration of their efforts and achievement.

The progress of pupils with SEN is monitored closely by their class teachers and the SEN co-ordinators. The teachers for SEN work effectively to support the learning of individual pupils in small groups where appropriate. These pupils have individual targets for learning that help them to understand how to improve their work. This good practice could usefully be shared by other teachers.

Teachers know their pupils' capabilities, mark their work and give them good oral feedback during lessons. Questions are used effectively during lessons to assess pupils' understanding and progress. Where marking is most effective, it provides pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work in the future. Older pupils feel that it would be helpful to have more written feedback on

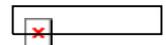
their work.

Pupils are assessed effectively in the nursery and pre-school classes using the 'stepping stones' towards the early learning goals. All parents are given a detailed annual report on their children's progress and, in the juniors, a mid-year progress report is also provided. There are regular tests on spellings and tables, checking pupils' basic acquisition of knowledge. Good use is made of standardised tests to assess their progress in reading and mathematics. Pupils in Year 6 attain very good results in the National Curriculum assessments in English, mathematics and science.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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



The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development and very good provision for their moral and social development. There is a welcoming ethos in which pupils feel cared for and a culture of mutual respect and consideration for others. Pupils are valued as individuals and their achievements are celebrated in class and assemblies. There is a good range of experiences, including sessions to develop pupils' self-knowledge, self-esteem and confidence. They are provided with opportunities to reflect on their feelings during assemblies and in lessons. A good example was seen in a science lesson for the infants, when pupils were asked to think about how the weather might affect their mood and feelings.

Pupils' behaviour is very good and they have a clear understanding of right and wrong. The school operates as a very orderly community and all pupils understand the rules implicitly. Older pupils are given responsibilities such as guiding visitors on parents' evenings, preparing the hall for assembly, organising the library, and caring for the younger ones before school starts in the morning. The school council meets regularly with the headteacher to make decisions on aspects of school life such as lunch-time arrangements, the tuck shop and the design for a new school coat.

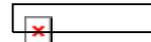
The Shrubbery School benefits from the links developed with the local community. Pupils visit St John's Church to learn about Christianity and a local vicar visits the school to talk about his work. Younger pupils learn about the emergency services and older ones interview local business people. Students from local secondary schools undertake work experience at the school. Pupils regularly participate in fund-raising activities, such as the harvest appeal and the balloon launch for Children in Need. These experiences all serve to broaden pupils' knowledge and understanding of public institutions and their role as citizens in the wider world.

The curriculum contains a programme of PSHE and RE that covers a wide range of topics to help pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures. This also promotes harmony within the school community. An attractive display of work by the infants showing how fireworks are used to celebrate Eid, Diwali and Bonfire Night, is a good example of such awareness and mutual respect regarding different cultures.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



There is good provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils. The school has an effective behaviour policy and teachers ensure that pupils know what is considered good and undesirable behaviour. Pupils respond very positively to the high expectations of their conduct. They are respectful and helpful to each other and to adults. This contributes to pupils feeling safe and happy.

Teachers help to raise pupils' awareness about how their behaviour affects others and this includes discussions about bullying. As a result, pupils quickly learn to be thoughtful and gentle, and to develop strategies which help them to resolve incidental disputes amicably. The school has an anti-bullying policy; however, it is not fully compliant with the most up-to-date Department for Education and Skills (DfES) guidance.

The staff have completed training to ensure that they know how to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils. There are satisfactory child protection procedures in place and a named child protection officer. Admissions and attendance registers are maintained correctly. An appropriate number of adults supervise pupils during playtimes.

Systems for dealing with First Aid are well established and all accidents are clearly recorded and are dealt with appropriately. There is an efficient red card system which enables staff to send swiftly for additional assistance should the need arise. There are qualified First Aiders in each of the school buildings as well as suitable equipment in every block.

There is a comprehensive health and safety policy, which includes clear guidelines relating to the safety of pupils on school visits. All staff complete detailed risk assessments prior to school visits. There are annual safety checks and fire alarms are tested regularly. Fire drills take place every term and evacuation times are logged.

The recent building works conform to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002. There is a ramp up to the nursery with sidebars and flat access to the new single-storey classroom block. There are two toilets for use by disabled pupils. These are fitted with alarms. The school has identified the need to improve accessibility to some of the junior and infant classrooms. This is being considered in future plans. However, the school is limited to what it can do to improve the converted house because it is a listed building.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

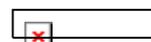
The school meets all but one of the requirements.

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

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

- update its anti-bullying policy with regard to current DfES guidance (paragraph 3(2)(a)).

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff



The school has two proprietors, one of whom is the bursar. The teaching and non-teaching staff have a range of suitable qualifications and provide a breadth of experience. The headteacher completes detailed checks on staff prior to their appointment. These include employment and character references and checks on professional qualifications. The school is rigorous in carrying out checks with the Criminal Records Bureau on all members of staff. Although there are procedures to check the medical fitness of staff before their appointment, these are insufficiently thorough and are not documented.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

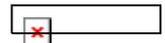
No.

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:

- ensure that appropriate checks on the medical fitness of all staff are carried out prior to their appointment (paragraph 4(c)).

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The school buildings are suitable for their purpose. They consist of a converted house, a purpose-built, single-storey classroom block and another building, which has recently been refurbished. The latter includes a very well designed self-contained nursery and pre-school unit with an enclosed play area. The pupils benefit from having access to a library and ICT suite. However, they would welcome additional access to ICT in classrooms.

The premises and accommodation are regularly maintained and are in a good state of repair. The gardens and trees within the school grounds contribute to the attractive setting of the school. There is sufficient access so that emergency evacuations can be accomplished safely for all the existing pupils, including those with SEN.

The classrooms are generally well resourced and the majority are appropriate in size for the small groups of pupils. The exceptions to this are the small infant classrooms in the main building; however, the teachers are very skilled in the use of the limited space available. They also make effective use of other parts of the school for practical activities.

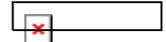
Classrooms and other parts of the school are clean, hygienic and tidy. However, there is limited space for the storage of resources. The overall standard of décor is good, but some of the flooring in the main block is looking old and worn.

The grounds of the school include a large area of grass, which is used for games and team sports. There are separate areas for older and younger pupils at playtimes, which enable them to play safely.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



Parents are provided with an appropriate range of information through the school prospectus and regular newsletters, which are informative and interesting. The school operates an 'open door' policy and parents are welcome to make an appointment to meet with staff. In the summer term, parents are invited to 'meet the teacher' sessions to acquaint themselves with their children's next teachers and to receive information about the work they will cover in their new classes. However, there are a few items of information not currently provided to parents.

There are three formal consultation meetings for parents each year and they receive a detailed written report at the end of the summer term. They are also provided with details of their children's results from standardised tests. In addition, progress reports for pupils in the junior department are issued during the spring term, providing grades for effort and achievement.

A relatively high proportion of parents responded to the questionnaire that was sent out before the inspection. The overwhelming majority was pleased with the progress that their children made at the school; they felt that pupils are expected to work hard and behave well. They felt that the school is well led, the teaching is good, and that their children are happy at school. Most parents who responded felt comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem.

During the course of the inspection, the school was updating its information to parents to ensure that they were aware that a range of policies is available to them on request.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

No

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

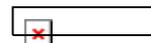
In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should provide to parents of pupils and prospective pupils, and on request to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State, or a body approved under section 163(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002, the following information:

- the full name, usual residential address and telephone number of the proprietors (paragraph 6(2)(b));
- particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for admissions, discipline and exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e)); and
- particulars of the educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements and for pupils for whom English is an additional language (paragraph 6(2)(f)).

In addition, the school should make it known to parents and prospective parents that the following information is available on request:

- particulars of policies relating to bullying, child protection, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, and sanctions adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving (paragraph 6(2)(h)); and
- the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 6(2)(k)).

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



The school has recently updated its complaints policy and a copy has been sent to every parent. The procedures now comply fully with the regulations and specify clear time scales for the informal and formal stages of a complaint. There is also provision for a hearing panel of at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. This would include at least one person who is independent of the running and management of the school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



Name of school:	The Shrubbery School		
DfES ref number:	330/6064		
Type of school:	Primary and Nursery		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	3-11 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 145,	Girls 113,	Total 258
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys 6,	Girls 1,	Total 7
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 1,	Girls 0,	Total 1
Annual fees (day pupils):	Nursery - £3,048 Infants - £3,990 Juniors - £4,674		
Address of school:	Walmley Ash Road Sutton Coldfield West Midlands B76 1HY		
E-mail address:	info@shrubbery.sch.bham.uk		
Telephone number:	0121 351 1582		
Fax number:	0121 351 1124		
Headteacher:	Mrs Hilary Cook		
Proprietor:	Mr Paul Terry and Mr Eric Allen		
Lead Inspector:	Mrs Jill Arnold HMI		
Dates of inspection:	22 - 25 November 2004		