

Crown 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.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Crown House School is an independent non-selective co-educational preparatory school in High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire. The school provides for pupils aged from three to eleven years. The current number on roll, 156 pupils, includes some part-time children in the Pre-school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the Pre-school and Reception classes. Sixteen children are in receipt of free education for three- and four-year-olds. The school is smaller than most primary schools. The large majority of pupils are White British and a small minority is from a range of minority ethnic heritages. Very few pupils are at an early stage of acquiring English. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. All pupils sit the 11+ examination and the large majority attain places at local selective grammar schools.

As part of a small group of preparatory schools, known as Alpha Schools Limited, the school is committed to the ideal of personal happiness and the full development of individual potential. The school opened in 1925 and moved to its current premises in the 1950s. The school was last inspected in 2008 by the Independent School Inspectorate.

Evaluation of the school

Crown House School provides a good quality of education for all pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The good curriculum and good quality of teaching and assessment promote pupils' good progress, particularly in mathematics and reading. The extensive range of enrichment activities provided by the school contributes to pupils' personal development and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which are outstanding, and lead to pupils' outstanding behaviour. Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety, including safeguarding procedures, is satisfactory. All except one of the independent school regulations are met.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

Quality of education

The good curriculum is broad, balanced and meets well the needs, interests and aspirations of the pupils and effectively promotes their good progress. It covers the full National Curriculum, including a good range of sport, religious education and all areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The Pre-school and Reception classes provide an interesting and welcoming environment that promotes children's good learning and development. The limited indoor and outdoor space, however, restricts the provision of child-initiated activities and opportunities for independent learning, particularly in the larger Reception class.

The curriculum policy is supported by suitable schemes of work that provide for good progression in learning. Schemes of work and lessons in personal, social and health education promote pupils' outstanding personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' personal development is enhanced further by an extensive range of well-attended clubs and enrichment activities. Clubs and activities cover the arts and sport, school trips, and events such as science fairs, design and technology days, activities for World Book Day, house competitions and an annual dramatic performance in the local theatre. Visiting professional speakers, including from a local bank, develop pupils' economic and enterprise awareness very well. All pupils participate with enthusiasm and enjoyment in such activities. Consequently, they develop into well-rounded citizens who are prepared effectively for the responsibilities of the next stage in their life.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. It is not yet outstanding because there is some variability in the quality of teaching, in the use of assessment and in pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils, parents and carers rightly praise the teachers for their dedication and commitment to helping pupils to progress as they do. One pupil spoke for many when she wrote, 'The teachers teach me well and give me a good understanding of my work.' Pupils make good progress and show good attitudes to their work as a result of effective teaching. Key strengths in teaching include positive relationships and behaviour management, effective lesson planning tailored to meet the needs of all pupils, engaging activities, and the use of resources including interactive computer whiteboards to model new skills. In a few outstanding lessons seen, teachers constantly assessed the progress of pupils, addressed misconceptions and asked probing questions to move the learning forward at a brisk pace. This is not yet the case in all lessons.

Activities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are well planned, based on accurate observation and assessment of children's learning, and matched to the full range of children's needs. Teaching assistants are relatively new, but they are deployed appropriately to support individuals and groups of children. Across the school, the teaching of mathematics is particularly successful in engaging pupils. Pupils say that they make most progress in mathematics because they enjoy the

investigational approach and problem-solving challenges. In some lessons, including writing lessons, pupils are not given such challenges or independence in their learning. Regular mathematics speed tests enable pupils to know how to improve their work. Pupils do not always know what to do to improve their writing because feedback in marking is variable and curricular targets are not set consistently.

Pupils achieve well from their starting points against challenging targets that are based on their capability. Attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is above age-related expectations across all areas of learning. Across the lower and upper schools, pupils continue to make good progress in lessons, particularly in mathematics. Progress in mathematics and reading is better than in writing. The workshop learning support in reading and mathematics is highly effective in addressing any underachievement. The school monitors pupils' progress rigorously at the end of the year to identify pupils who need extra support. It is not monitoring progress during the year to promote consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Nonetheless, pupils are prepared exceptionally well for the 11+ examination and the large majority attain places in the local grammar schools.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. 'I am very pleased with the school and have enjoyed watching my children flourish and become confident children.' This written comment from a parent summarises the many positive comments received from parents and carers about the school. From an early age, pupils develop a strong sense of self-esteem, self-knowledge and self-confidence through consistent praise and rewards in lessons and participation in the many extra-curricular activities provided. In raising funds for charities, in visits to and from representatives of public services and institutions, such as the police, hearing dogs, air ambulance and the Houses of Parliament, pupils learn to distinguish right from wrong. They develop a strong moral compass and gain a secure understanding of the adult world and public and civic life. They eagerly accept responsibility for being monitors and contribute positively to the community, for example, in visiting senior citizens and performing in the local theatre. They acquire a very good understanding and appreciation of their own and other cultures when studying such topics as Diwali and the Chinese New Year. Pupils from different cultural traditions get on exceptionally well together.

Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. From the Early Years Foundation Stage and throughout the school, children enjoy school very much as is evident in their extremely positive attitudes to learning, enthusiastic participation in all school activities and high levels of attendance. Their consistently thoughtful behaviour is an outstanding factor in their successful learning and creates an extremely positive school ethos. Pupils are courteous to others and proud of their achievements. They are highly considerate and very supportive of each other in lessons and around the school. Through science and personal, social and health education, pupils learn to keep themselves safe and healthy. Pupils say that they feel very safe in the school

and that they are confident to speak to teachers or the school secretary if they have any concerns.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The welfare, health and safety of pupils are satisfactory. All the questionnaires completed by pupils, parents and carers indicate that the school keeps the children safe. A pupil wrote, 'The staff help you and care about you.' The child protection policy and procedures are clear, but they do not reflect recent guidance and are not reviewed annually. While training for the designated child protection officer is up to date, it is not so for all other staff. Suitable arrangements were made before the end of the inspection for the training of all staff. All the required safer recruitment checks on staff and volunteers have been carried out appropriately.

Most of the questionnaires completed by pupils, parents and carers indicate that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. While supervision at break and lunchtime is adequate, it is not at a good level, and there have been incidents of pupils becoming over excited in playing games. The school has taken appropriate action in limiting the playing of football to one year group per day and pupils were seen to be playing exceptionally well together and enjoying strong friendships. The anti-bullying policy contains clear procedures, including circle time, to develop pupils' awareness of bullying and how to keep safe. The procedures are implemented appropriately by the school, resulting in very few incidents.

Health and safety risk assessments, including those for school trips, are carried out appropriately and the local fire service reports show that the school meets fire safety requirements. First aid training has been undertaken by a good number of staff in line with school policy. Admission and attendance registers are completed appropriately. Suitable arrangements meet the duties under the Equality Act 2010, including making adjustments to the curriculum when necessary for disabled pupils.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All of the required checks on the suitability of staff and others to work with children have been carried out and are recorded appropriately in a single central register. The register includes checks on safer recruitment requirements.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school is accommodated in a well-maintained Georgian house. It makes very good use of all available space and other venues, including a local church hall, local swimming pool and the local common, to provide the full National Curriculum. Specialist facilities support the teaching of science, information and communication technology, art and music. There is a well-stocked library. The school has a maximum capacity for 140 full-time equivalent pupils at any one time. Classrooms are full to capacity. The addition of the Pre-school class has limited the space for the Reception class and restricted the opportunities for the children's independent

learning, although some opportunities are provided in the covered outside area that is shared with the Pre-school class.

Provision of information

The school provides, or makes available, all of the required information for parents, carers and others. The information is listed on the website. It is clear and accurate, although not always up to date as policies are not reviewed regularly.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

A few parents and carers indicated in the completed questionnaires that the school did not have appropriate procedures for handling complaints. The policy and procedures meet the regulations and are made available to parents and others as required.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- ensure that the child protection policy and procedures reflect recent guidance issued by the Secretary of State and are reviewed annually, and that training for all staff is up-to-date (paragraph 7).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - monitoring pupils' levels of progress during the year and enabling teachers to use this assessment information to promote consistently good and better progress in reading, writing and mathematics
 - refining teachers' use of assessment during lessons to help all teachers to address misconceptions and to ask probing questions that move the learning forward at a brisk pace
 - setting, and reviewing regularly, curricular targets for pupils to enable them to know what they need to do to improve their work.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made.

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

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Preparatory school		
Date school opened	1925		
Age range of pupils	3–11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 80	Girls: 60	Total: 140
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 8	Girls: 8	Total: 16
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8,265		
Address of school	19 London Road High Wycombe Buckinghamshire HP11 1BJ		
Telephone number	01494 529927		
Email address	secretary@crownhouseschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Ali Khan		
Proprietor	Alpha Schools Limited		

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.



6 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Crown House School, High Wycombe HP11 1BJ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing you at work and play. You told us that your school is good, and we agree with you.

Your school gives you a good education. The good teaching and all the interesting activities provided in lessons, and in the many clubs and trips, help you to make good progress and attain high standards in your work. They also promote your outstanding personal development and behaviour. Those of you who attend workshop lessons make excellent progress in your reading. The pupils who met with me told me, and I agree, that you make most progress in mathematics because of the enjoyable challenges you are set. We have suggested how your teachers could make your English lessons as challenging so that your writing improves as much as your reading and mathematics. We have also suggested how more of your lessons could be outstanding.

You, and your parents and carers, told the inspectors that you feel very safe in school. We agree that the staff take care of you, but we have judged this area as satisfactory rather than good. This is because the school needs to make sure that all staff are trained in aspects of care and that the relevant paperwork is up to date in order for the school to meet all the regulations that the government requires.

You can help your school to get even better by improving your writing. The school has agreed to set you some challenging targets to help you to know how to improve your work. I hope you continue to enjoy your learning and wish you success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Sue Frater
Her Majesty's Inspector