

# Crown House School

Bassetsbury Manor, Bassetsbury Lane, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP11 1QX

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|--|-----------------------------|
| <b>Inspection dates</b>                      | 14–16 June 2016             |
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>                 | <b>Requires improvement</b> |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | Requires improvement        |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good                        |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | Good                        |
| Outcomes for pupils                          | Good                        |
| Early years provision                        | Requires improvement        |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good                        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- The issues identified at the previous inspection have not been fully addressed. Leaders do not have an accurate view of the progress pupils make.
- Leaders do not monitor the quality of teaching rigorously enough. There is no robust system of performance management in place.
- Teachers at different stages of their career do not receive tailored training opportunities or regular guidance to develop their skills and expertise appropriately.
- The teaching of writing in key stage 2 does not build effectively on pupils' prior achievements. Opportunities to extend pupils' proficiency with grammar conventions are insufficient.
- Teaching assistants are not always deployed effectively. As a result, pupils do not receive prompt support and guidance in order to secure or extend their understanding.
- Leaders do not monitor pupils' attendance closely enough. Registers are not completed with precision. Consequently, leaders are too slow to pick up on patterns of absence.
- Some parents are unhappy with levels of communication between home and school. They are not always sure how well their children are learning or conducting themselves.
- Children do not make the progress they are capable of in the early years. The quality of teachers' assessments of children's learning is variable.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils attain high standards, particularly in key stage 1, in reading writing and mathematics.
- The teaching of reading is a strength. Pupils make good use of the school's resources, reading widely, enthusiastically and often.
- Teachers know their pupils extremely well and use this knowledge to help pupils become successful learners. Many parents speak highly of the quality of teaching.
- Teachers' questioning encourages pupils to reason and think deeply. Pupils are highly articulate.
- Pupils feel safe and well cared for. They say that learning is enjoyable because teachers make lessons fun and interesting.
- Pupils behave well. They are polite and courteous towards adults. Pupils work collaboratively and complete learning tasks eagerly.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management, by:
  - establishing a robust cycle of school improvement planning, in order to review school performance regularly
  - monitoring school performance methodically including how well pupils are progressing
  - developing the school's curriculum in order to strengthen pupils' understanding of British values
  - supporting teachers systematically to improve their skills and expertise
  - monitoring pupils' attendance in order to ensure all pupils attend school regularly
  - improving communication between home and school so parents are kept well informed about their child's progress, attendance and behaviour.
- Raise attainment and the quality of teaching, particularly in writing, by:
  - ensuring that teaching assistants contribute effectively to supporting pupils' learning
  - ensuring that all teachers check pupils' understanding and address misconceptions effectively
  - developing pupils' mastery of grammar more rapidly in key stage 2.
- Improve the quality of teaching in the early years and raise standards, by:
  - making sure that teachers have an accurate understanding of what pupils already know and can do
  - ensuring that teachers promote effective learning by providing tasks that enable pupils to explore and learn from first-hand experiences, including when planning appealing outdoor learning activities
  - strengthening assessment procedures, including developing a stronger partnership with parents
  - ensuring that adults receive appropriate training to improve their skills and expertise.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher and proprietor have ensured that all the independent school standards are met. They have successfully addressed the previously unmet standard relating to pupils' welfare, health and safety by ensuring the child protection policy now reflects current guidance issued by the Secretary of State. However, there is no clear evidence that leaders have fully addressed improvement points set at the previous inspection. For example, systems to monitor pupils' progress are still underdeveloped, particularly in writing.
- Although the headteacher and senior staff know the school well, school improvement planning requires improvement. There is a lack of specific targets and scant information about how developments are systematically monitored and evaluated. As a result, it is not possible for leaders to have a secure view of the progress made by pupils or to hold staff robustly to account. Parents, too, feel the school could do more to ensure that they know how well their child is progressing.
- The headteacher is relatively new to post, having previously served at the school as a class teacher for many years. Staff and pupils speak highly of his unwavering devotion to the pupils. This is borne out in his enthusiasm for spending time in classes with pupils and working alongside teachers. Despite this, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching is not rigorous enough. There is no robust performance management process in place for teachers to enable them to have a focused approach to the development of their teaching and to be held to account for pupils' outcomes.
- Staff have positive views regarding the training opportunities available. However, leaders are yet to make adjustments so that training fully meets the needs of all teachers, including those at different stages of their career. For example, staff new to teaching in the early years have received insufficient training to prepare them to meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage well.
- Many aspects of school performance are secure, including the high rate of attendance of most pupils. Despite this, leaders' work to ensure that all pupils attend regularly is not precise enough. Although staff complete attendance registers routinely, some pupil absence is not defined using the school's agreed codes. As a result, it is unclear why, in some instances, pupils are absent. Moreover, leaders do not use this information to look meticulously at pupils' patterns of attendance over time. Consequently, a small number of pupils, who have had regular spells of absence, are not supported well enough to improve.
- This year, leaders have introduced regular meetings with teachers in order to discuss how well pupils are learning. Every member of staff, including the headteacher, is highly committed to the school's vision of 'the individual matters'. Using pupils' work, first-hand experience and a range of standardised information, the headteacher is well informed about each pupil's attainment. However, this information is not analysed in sufficient depth in order to keep an eye on how well pupils are progressing.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and rooted firmly in the national curriculum. Pupils particularly enjoy work that encourages links across the curriculum such as their recent work in history, art and geography when studying volcanoes. A wide range of additional activities including ballet, judo, knitting, journalism and business clubs deepens the curriculum.
- The provision for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is excellent. Pupils talk knowledgeably about school visits including to the Natural History Museum and the overseas ski trip. Such experiences broaden pupils' horizons, enriching their first-hand experiences successfully.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage. Many take up places at grammar schools. They start secondary school with the skills needed for success and high levels of self-assurance and self-confidence.
- Because of the school's strong personal and social education programme, pupils have a strong moral compass, directed by a secure appreciation of values like friendship and kindness. However, the breadth of pupils' understanding of British values including justice and tolerance is not so overt, as leaders have not strongly developed such themes through the school's curriculum.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The headteacher has ensured that the school's policy and procedures have strengthened correctly since the previous inspection. The school's policy contains all the required information and practice closely adheres to current guidance. Staff have received a variety of appropriate training including in first aid, the government's 'Prevent' duty and safeguarding matters. Staff are clear about what to do if they have a concern about a child.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers know their pupils well, exemplifying the school's mantra that 'the individual matters'. Warm, caring relationships are forged between teachers and pupils from the word go. Teachers get the best out of their pupils, skilfully facilitating lively discussion. They question pupils thoughtfully, often exploring pupils' first responses in greater depth. Consequently, pupils are proficient at justifying their reasoning and stating their ideas.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. Their crisp and careful explanations enable pupils to participate in learning activities accurately and actively. As a result, pupils work well together, organising themselves efficiently, showing high levels of responsibility and respect.
- Many parents speak highly of the quality of teaching. One parent commented: 'Staff know all the children and their parents well. They are kind, caring and provide the children with excellent opportunities to achieve their potential'.
- Pupils say that lessons are interesting and good fun. They particularly enjoy activities that link to a theme, such as the recent work on pirates.
- Teachers take full advantage of time with pupils. They carefully check pupils' understanding throughout lessons and anticipate misconceptions skilfully. This means any uncertainty is nipped in the bud and pupils progress well in a variety of subjects.
- The teaching of reading is excellent in key stage 1 and key stage 2. Pupils have secure phonics (the sounds that letters make) skills and can confidently decode unfamiliar words and read well.
- The teaching of mathematics is effective. Pupils have regular opportunities to solve problems and apply their skills to investigating problems that are more complex. Pupils work accurately and systematically, enjoying high levels of success. Occasionally, work for the most able pupils in key stage 2 lacks a high level of challenge.
- Pupils have regular opportunities to write for a variety of purposes. However, in the upper school there are too few opportunities to consolidate or extend pupils' grasp of grammar. This limits pupils' ability to improve the quality of their writing further. Work to improve this aspect is underway but leaders are not clear what difference this is making.
- Pupils receive high-quality verbal feedback in lessons. However, not all teachers follow the school's expectations when providing written feedback to pupils. Consequently, sometimes opportunities are missed to address pupils' misunderstandings and help them learn from their mistakes.
- Teaching assistants often provide good support for pupils' learning when working with individuals or small groups. They ask thoughtful questions and gently encourage pupils to think deeply. However, they are not always deployed well enough to support pupils' learning during whole-class teaching. This is particularly the case in the early years, where there are too few opportunities for adults to engage in productive conversation with children about their learning.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils enjoy school and feel safe. They have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying and say it rarely happens. Pupils know how to seek support from adults if the need arises.
- Pupils say they feel safe. All potential risks to pupils' safety in school are carefully assessed. Pupils are benefiting from the opportunities the new site affords, including the more expansive grounds.
- Staff know what to do if they become concerned about an individual pupil. Procedures to employ the support of outside agencies from time to time are used appropriately.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave extremely well; good manners and courtesy towards adults is the norm. Pupils fulfil their role as ambassadors of the school with a high level of integrity and pride.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about learning well. They enjoy the challenges their teachers set, responding with diligence and determination so that they become successful learners.

- Most pupils attend school regularly. However, a small number of pupils have patterns of regular, intermittent absence.
- There are very few serious incidents. Pupils are satisfied that everyone behaves well and that minor fallouts are only occasional. Sometimes, when such incidents happen, some parents feel they are not kept in the loop sufficiently well. Inspectors concur, noting during the inspection the school's lack of record-keeping for minor misdemeanours.

## Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils attain high standards. Approximately 80% take up places at grammar school.
- Pupils make excellent progress in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1. Transition into Year 3 is tremendous and pupils build well on prior success. This is because teachers have high expectations, know their pupils well and ensure that tasks are well matched to pupils' starting points. As a result, standards are high in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Although standards remain high for many pupils in the upper school, progress slows for some. This is because in mathematics the most able pupils sometimes complete tasks that are too easy and well within their capabilities. Similarly, in writing, pupils have too few opportunities to expand their writing expertise. Pupils' grasp of grammatical conventions is not developed sufficiently well. Although they write regularly, the quality does not improve as rapidly as it does lower down the school. Some pupils, including the most able, are capable of achieving even higher standards.
- Pupils read well in all year groups. They respond well to texts and read with fluency and expression. Pupils have excellent skills when analysing texts and are able to articulate shades of meaning.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are catered for effectively. The school provides appropriate one-to-one support in the 'workshop'. Sometimes activities are designed to help pupils catch up, or work on specific skills or to challenge pupils who have a gift or talent in a particular subject. As a result, individual needs are met well.
- Pupils communicate exceptionally well. There are regular opportunities for pupils to develop their oral communication skills throughout the school. Teachers develop pupils' spoken language and vocabulary very effectively. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils revelled in the opportunity to engage in a formal debate for the first time, captivated by the theme of 'We can learn a lot from pirates'. Pupils are highly articulate and participate in such activities with wit, brevity and conviction.

## Early years provision

requires improvement

- Children enter the early years with skills and abilities typical of their age. They get off to a good start in the pre-school. However, children's progress slows in their Reception year. Many make insufficient progress from their starting points, particularly in reading, writing and number. This is because teaching does not build sufficiently well on prior achievements.
- Some tasks are not challenging enough or sufficiently engaging. Too few pupils are ready to start Year 1 with the reading, number and writing skills and understanding appropriate for their age.
- Learning records cover most aspects of learning but not all. Teachers' assessments are variable in quality and do not always fully support the judgements made. Parents are not fully involved in contributing to learning records throughout the year.
- Children's early reading skills are developing too slowly. This is because leaders have not ensured that new staff have received appropriate training to equip them with the skills needed to deliver high-quality phonics sessions. In recent times, children are benefiting from better teaching and inexperienced staff are receiving greater support. As a result, teaching is now beginning to tackle gaps in children's phonics knowledge more rigorously. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this work on raising standards.
- Children settle well and exhibit high levels of self-assurance, enjoyment of learning and security. Very positive relationships between children and the adults who care for them are strongly evident.
- The school nurtures a love of books and storytelling starts from the word go. Children thrive on sharing stories and discuss class topics like dinosaurs with high delight.
- In the pre-school class, children enjoy a range of activities, encouraged and supported well by adults. Adults eagerly start worthwhile conversations, questioning children appropriately to extend their ideas. For example, when a pre-school child asked if the plants needed more water, the teacher skilfully challenged

him to consider how he would know when they had had enough. There are fewer opportunities for adults to engage with children in the Reception class, as activities do not encourage children to explore so freely.

- Although the outdoor learning environment is resourced appropriately, activities are not planned to cater for different aspects of learning. As a result, children flit from one resource to another, struggling to sustain their interest.
- Senior leaders correctly identified some weaknesses in the school's provision for the early years at the beginning of the year. Some support has helped stem the decline but has not improved things quickly enough. Too few children are on track to meet a good level of development.
- The early years leader has only led the department for a few weeks. Already, she has a clear grasp of what needs to improve. Brimming with ideas, the leader is keen to get started on improving this aspect of the school's provision. The leader is able to identify accurately ways to improve, such as ensuring children have more opportunities to explore and learn through first-hand experiences.

## School details

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|--------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 110557   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 10012906 |
| <b>DfE registration number</b> | 825/6016 |

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

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| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Preparatory school   |
| <b>School status</b>                       | Independent school   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 3–11 years   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 157  |
| <b>Number of part time pupils</b>          | 17   |
| <b>Proprietor</b>                          | Alpha Schools Limited  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Mr Ben Kenyon  |
| <b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>            | £3,712.50–£8,550.00  |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01494 529 927  |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.crownhouseschool.co.uk">www.crownhouseschool.co.uk</a>           |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | <a href="mailto:secretary@crowhouseschool.co.uk">secretary@crowhouseschool.co.uk</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>         | 4–5 July 2012  |

## Information about this school

- Crown House School is a non-selective preparatory school for boys and girls between the ages of three and 11 years.
- In 2014 the school moved to its new premises in Bassetsbury Manor. The building has been renovated and extended.
- The school is registered for up to 160 pupils. Currently, there are 157 pupils on roll. One of the pupils has an education, health and care plan.
- The school is smaller than most primary schools.
- Some children attend the pre-school on a part-time basis. Children in the Reception class attend full time.
- The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic groups is below the national average.
- No pupils attend alternative provision.
- Most pupils sit the 11+ examination and a large majority attain places at selective grammar schools.
- The school was last inspected in July 2012 when it was judged to be a good school.
- The school belongs to a small group of preparatory schools, known as Alpha Schools Limited.
- The school is committed to the fundamental principle that 'the individual matters.'

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors undertook 18 lesson observations, three jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' books, both within lessons and as a separate activity with the headteacher.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the early years leader and class teachers.
- Inspectors took into account the views of 27 parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the one parent who an inspector met in person.
- Inspectors took into account the views of seven members of staff who responded to the questionnaire.
- Inspectors met formally with six pupils from key stage 2.
- Inspectors analysed documents relating to the school's provision, records relating to pupils' achievement, the curriculum, the quality of teaching, and pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures, including the safeguarding policy, the school's single central record and its recruitment procedures.
- Inspectors evaluated the school's policies to ensure that they met with the independent school standards.
- The lead inspector undertook a tour of the school site to ensure that the school's buildings, boundaries and resources complied with the independent school standards.

## Inspection team

Elizabeth Farr, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Bruce Waeland

Ofsted Inspector



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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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