

Dame Catherine Harpur's School

Rose Lane, Ticknall, Derby, Derbyshire DE73 7JW

Inspection dates

25–27 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The knowledgeable and experienced, recently appointed headteacher has achieved a great deal in a relatively short space of time. For example, an effective assessment system, appropriate staff training, and the updating of key policies have been undertaken during the academic year.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good, including in early years. Teachers assess pupils' abilities accurately and plan activities that stimulate and motivate them. Pupils make strong progress in a wide range of subjects.
- Staff know pupils and their families very well. Relationships between adults and pupils are extremely positive. The school has a 'homely' feel to it.
- Pupils behave well. Incidents of poor behaviour, bullying, and racist and homophobic language are extremely rare.
- Pupils enjoy school and report they feel happy and safe. Attendance is higher and persistent absence is lower than the national average.
- Pupils enjoy a broad and balanced curriculum. Teachers provide pupils with appropriate activities to develop knowledge and skills, particularly in science and languages.
- Staff have recently received effective safeguarding training and are therefore clear regarding the procedures to follow, should they have a welfare concern about a pupil.
- The proprietor and headteacher have ensured that the independent school standards are met.
- Teachers do not frequently require pupils to develop problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics.
- Some teachers do not expect pupils to write frequently, to practise their handwriting, or insist that pupils present work to a high standard.
- Adults do not always encourage children in early years to contribute to class discussions as much as they could.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enhance pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics.
- Require pupils to write more frequently, to improve their handwriting, spelling, punctuation and use of grammar, and ensure that pupils present their work well in all subjects.
- Encourage some children in early years to contribute more often to discussions.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and proprietor have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The recently appointed headteacher has achieved a great deal in a relatively short space of time. For example, key policies have been updated, and an effective assessment system and a new curriculum have been successfully introduced during the academic year.
- The headteacher has ensured that the curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils develop knowledge and skills in English, mathematics, the humanities, science, art, physical education (PE) and modern foreign languages.
- Staff are overwhelmingly supportive of the school's leadership. They receive frequent and helpful advice on how to improve their practice and are encouraged to undertake a wide range of professional development. A response to Ofsted's staff questionnaire was, 'It is a lovely place to work, great staff, management and supportive parents who all work together to create this very special environment where children thrive.'
- The headteacher and proprietor have ensured the areas for improvement identified at the previous standard inspection have been suitably addressed. For example, staff have now completed appropriate safeguarding training.
- The headteacher has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas requiring development. Self-evaluation is accurate and there is a clear vision for moving the school forward. For example, the headteacher and governing body (known as the senior management team) recently re-examined the school's values and ethos.
- School improvement plans are well written and clear. They contain relevant actions and realistic timescales for any actions to be completed. The governing body can, therefore, hold the headteacher fully to account for any actions taken.
- The headteacher ensures that pupils experience a curriculum that prepares them well for life in modern Britain. Pupils speak knowledgeably regarding British values and faiths and cultures different to their own.
- The leadership of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is a strength. Support from outside agencies, such as the community paediatrician, is sought promptly, and effective individual education plans are in place to ensure pupils with SEND make good progress.
- The proprietor has ensured that the school's safeguarding policy is made available to parents and carers on the school's website. The policy meets the required independent school standards.
- Parents are extremely supportive of the school and its leadership. All parents who responded to Ofsted's Parent View survey agreed that their children are happy, safe and looked after well. One comment, typical of many others, was, 'We are very lucky to have found such a caring and enriching school. My child's self-belief, confidence and engagement with learning have increased beyond belief in the last two years.'

Governance

- The senior management team has a very good mix of skills and experience that enable its members to monitor the work of the school closely. Individual governors have undertaken relevant training in safer recruitment, child protection, health and safety, and data protection.
- Individual governors have recently carried out monitoring activities in areas such as safeguarding, finance, and health and safety. After these visits, detailed reports are written and fed back to other governors during the frequent meetings, keeping all members of the team up to date.
- The governing body is knowledgeable about the school and knows very well its strengths and weaknesses. It is well placed to help move the school forward.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The designated safeguarding lead and deputy safeguarding lead have received up-to-date and relevant training. There are effective systems in place for staff to record any welfare concerns they may have about a pupil or family. Staff know to request the support of outside agencies, such as social care, should the need arise.
- The headteacher has ensured that all staff have received appropriate training in a variety of safeguarding topics, such as the 'Prevent' duty, fabricated and induced illnesses, signs of neglect, county lines drug trafficking and child sexual exploitation.
- The proprietor has ensured that all necessary checks are made on adults before they can volunteer or work at the school. The single central record meets current guidance and legislation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. Staff know individual pupils extremely well and plan activities that stimulate and motivate them.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. For example, in the key stage 2 class, pupils were keen to learn more about the plays of William Shakespeare. They enjoyed writing insults in his style and language of the time, one example being, 'Thou art an infectious weather-bitten toad!'
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' abilities is accurate. They frequently check pupils' workbooks to help to ensure pupils are attaining well and making good progress. This enables teachers to set work pitched at the correct level of challenge.
- Pupils' achievements and those areas they need to develop further are identified at termly 'learning review points'. These help teachers to plan effectively for the following term and identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils are engaged in the activities planned for them, especially when they are of a practical nature. For example, in the key stage 1 class, pupils enjoyed learning the value of money using different coins. In the key stage 2 class, pupils designed rockets and

investigated whether the number and size of the rockets' fins would cause them to fly any further.

- Phonics is taught well. Adults have received appropriate training and ensure that the sessions are engaging. Pupils enjoyed learning the 'oe' sound and explored how the words 'potato' and 'tomato' change when they become plural. Pupils finished the session by correctly writing sentences such as, 'Joe played the oboe with his toe.'
- Pupils have an 'off piste' learning book. This allows for 'in the moment' learning and encourages pupils to investigate their own interests and to learn about current news stories. This approach helps to motivate pupils and maintain their interest in school.
- Teachers ensure that classrooms are bright and stimulating. The good range of resources helps to support pupils' writing and mathematical development.
- Teaching assistants' support for pupils is a strength of the school's work. They understand the importance of promoting pupils' independence by allowing some tasks to be completed by the pupil, without adult support.
- Annual reports to parents are detailed. They contain general comments regarding pupils' attainment and progress, as well as their potential next steps. Pupils and the headteacher can make comments, as well as providing information regarding pupils' attitudes to school and their personal development.
- Teachers do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to improve their problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics, and nor do they ensure that pupils write at length, therefore practising handwriting, spelling, punctuation and grammar skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are kept and feel safe. Rigorous checks are made on the school building to ensure pupils' health and safety are maintained. For example, fire extinguisher, Legionnaires' disease and electrical testing checks are undertaken annually.
- Pupils are keen and enthusiastic learners. They ask relevant questions and have a good attitude to learning, which has a positive impact on the progress they make.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and be healthy. They are knowledgeable regarding internet and bicycle safety, and the benefits of eating a balanced diet and taking regular exercise.
- A kindness tree in the library encourages pupils to write something that makes them happy. One comment, typical of others was, 'It makes me happy when I am helpful.'
- Pupils talk knowledgeably about the British values of tolerance, respect for others and democracy. Adults use the diverse school population as a resource for pupils to speak different languages, including German, French and Spanish.
- Pupils' personal development is enhanced through educational visits. Recently, pupils visited Bosworth battlefield and Stratford-upon-Avon. Pupils in key stage 2 are particularly looking forward to the annual outward-bound residential visit to Wales.

- Pupils do not always present their work as well as they could.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good during lessons and at break- and lunchtimes. Pupils told the inspector that any rare instances of poor behaviour or bullying are dealt with promptly and fairly by staff. The headteacher undertakes an analysis of any such incidents to discover any patterns. Incidents have reduced during this academic year.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance is above the national average and persistent absence is well below the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The vast majority of pupils are working at the school's age-related expectations and are making strong progress in reading and mathematics, particularly the four rules of number. However, pupils' ability to solve problems and reason mathematically is more limited.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress and receive effective support. Their needs are identified promptly, and individual education plans are sharply focused and reviewed frequently.
- Pupils progress well in a wide range of subjects, including history, geography, design and technology, and music. Key stage 2 pupils told the inspector that they particularly enjoyed exploring these subjects during the recent, 'Why are Nordic countries noteworthy?' topic.
- Pupils make particularly good progress in science. They increasingly deepen their scientific knowledge and skills and work systematically through a range of well-planned experiments.
- Pupils read frequently and enjoy books from the well-stocked library. For example, key stage 2 pupils currently enjoy reading books written by the author Michael Morpurgo.
- Some pupils are making less progress in writing. Pupils too infrequently write at length, limiting their opportunity to practise and improve their spelling, punctuation, grammar and handwriting.

Early years provision

Good

- Teaching in early years is consistently good. Adults carefully plan interesting and engaging activities to ensure children make strong progress from their differing starting points.
- Adults assess children's abilities frequently and accurately. Parents are encouraged to contribute to this assessment throughout the year. This information ensures that children are suitably challenged in all areas of the early years curriculum and make good progress.
- Prior to starting at the school, children and families visit the classroom. This enables children to become familiar with staff, each other and the routines. Parents are encouraged to complete an 'All about me' booklet for their child. These effective transition

arrangements ensure that staff have a good knowledge and understanding of each child before they start in Nursery, enabling children to settle quickly.

- Adults provide children with a wide variety of activities in a bright and stimulating environment. For example, in Nursery, children investigated their fingerprints by using ink-pads and paper, and used magnifying glasses and microscopes to investigate mini-beasts. They also played musical instruments, painted and looked at books in the reading corner.
- Children with SEND receive effective support. Staff ensure that children's needs are identified promptly and where necessary have extra support from outside agencies, such as the speech and language team.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective because staff in early years have received the same training and follow the same procedures as other members of staff. Several adults have the paediatric first-aid qualification.
- Children experience a broad range of activities and explore the local community. Recently, they have experienced speaking French, yoga and music therapy sessions, as well as frequently visiting the church and local library.
- Relationships between adults and children are warm and positive. Children follow instructions promptly, ensuring that activities are not disrupted and flow smoothly.
- Parents are extremely positive regarding the provision in early years. One comment typical of many was, 'My child absolutely loves it here!'
- Adults do not always ensure that some children contribute to class discussions as much as they could.

School details

Unique reference number	113023
DfE registration number	830/6020
Inspection number	10078661

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.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	39
Number of part-time pupils	13
Proprietor	Dame Catherine Harpur's School Foundation
Joint Chairs of the Governing Body	Amanda Harmer and Salli Gosling
Headteacher	Lorna Harvey
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,794
Telephone number	01332 862792
Website	https://damecatherines.org
Email address	office@damecatherines.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–9 June 2017

Information about this school

- Dame Catherine Harpur's School is a small independent school located in the village of Ticknall, Derbyshire. The proprietor is the Dame Catherine Harpur's School Foundation. The governing body, which is known as the senior management team, manages the school.
- There are currently 39 pupils on roll. Ten pupils attend in Years 1 to 6, of which two pupils are part time. Fourteen children attend early years, of which 11 are part time. Fifteen pupils are home-schooled for various amounts of time during the week.

- There are two classes and Nursery provision. Class 1 has Reception children and pupils in Years 1 and 2. Class 2 has pupils in Years 3 to 6.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average. No pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school's previous inspection was in June 2017, when it was deemed to be inadequate. A progress monitoring inspection took place in November 2017, when the previously unmet standards were all found to be met.
- The school's aims to 'include, ignite and innovate' pupils and be a place where 'we celebrate children being themselves, where they can develop curiosity and inquisitiveness and where they can be children.'
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2018.

Information about this inspection

- Ofsted announced the inspection to the headteacher the day before the inspection began.
- The inspector observed learning in all classes. He examined a variety of pupils' work books in English, mathematics and other subjects.
- The inspector held a range of meetings with the headteacher, four members of staff, and four governors, including a joint chair of the senior management team. The inspector spoke with the leaders responsible for early years and for pupils with SEND, eight pupils and 12 parents. He also listened to four pupils read.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents and policies, including those relating to the curriculum, assessment, school improvement planning and attendance, and records relating to health and safety and safeguarding.
- There were 26 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, including the free-text service. There were four responses to Ofsted's staff survey and no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Peter Stonier, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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