

Heritage School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	873/6045
Unique Reference Number	135404
Inspection number	329409
Inspection dates	16 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Michèle Messaoudi

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended.

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 08456 404040

www.ofsted.gov.uk



Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Heritage School is a new coeducational independent day school with a Christian foundation that opened in September 2007. It is located in the centre of Cambridge. There are 19 pupils on roll aged between five and ten years and taught in three classes. Four of the pupils are bilingual. No pupil has been identified as having additional learning needs. Although the school is also registered for children of Reception age, there is no Reception class this year. The school will open a Year 6 class in 2009 and intends to expand into a secondary school in the future. Heritage seeks to provide a high quality of education based on the principles of British educationalist Charlotte Mason who founded the Parents' National Education Union (PNEU) in the late 19th century. It aims to provide a rich education, based on a broad curriculum likened to 'an abundant feast', 'designed to lay strong foundations in core skills, engage children with inspirational ideas and help them retain their natural love of learning'; and to 'prepare children for life, not merely for examinations.' This is the school's first published inspection report.

Evaluation of the school

Heritage School successfully achieves its aims. Committed staff provide a good quality of education that enables pupils to make good progress in their learning. The school makes outstanding provision for pupils' personal development and for their welfare, health and safety. All this is because the school is well led and managed by a headteacher who has a clear vision and makes good use of accurate school self-evaluation to improve the school. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the educational provision. The school complies with all the regulations for independent schools. It will need to ensure that it complies with all the requirements for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) when it re-opens a Reception class.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. It has some outstanding as well as satisfactory features. The breadth, balance and richness of the curriculum are real strengths. There is a strong emphasis on reading, writing and mathematics to provide a secure foundation of basic skills. Reading skills are taught well and pupils are encouraged to read whole books rather than extracts from an early age. For this purpose, a programme of English literature is in place across the age range. In mathematics, the teaching of mental skills is a particular strength. In science and nature study, the curriculum

provides a hands-on approach to learning, through direct observation and practical activities. The school emphasizes the importance of narrative history, stressing chronology and the ability to re-tell, and both history and geography are taught in their local and world dimensions. Provision for art is outstanding. Provision for crafts is satisfactory and the school has identified broadening the subject and the range of technological resources as an area for development. French, Latin and music are taught by specialists. French is taught throughout the school and Latin from Year 4. All pupils have weekly music lessons, daily opportunities for singing, and some choose to learn to play the violin. Provision for physical education (PE) is outstanding, all pupils having several weekly PE and games lessons, and swimming. The programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) reflects the Christian ethos of the school. Resources are generally adequate in range, quantity and quality and include a library. The school deliberately does not use computers as learning tools as it gives prominence to books. The planning of the curriculum is satisfactory. One of its strengths resides in meaningful cross-curricular links woven between history, art, music and literature. This helps pupils to imaginatively 'inhabit' various eras of history and increase their understanding of different aspects of human development. Also, the daily timetable provides a good balance of academic, creative and physical activities. The brief curriculum overviews, two-year rolling programmes and additional documentation on methodology give the current teachers sufficient support to plan their lessons for the small numbers of pupils on roll, whether they are taught in single or mixed-age classes. Whereas a lot of thought has been put into the design of the curriculum, the school has not had time to develop more detailed schemes of work and recognises this as an area for improvement.

Whilst teaching and assessment are good overall, assessment is outstanding, enabling all pupils to make good progress over time. Teachers' good subject knowledge and training in Charlotte Mason methods lends confidence to their teaching style that consists mainly of brief presentations, followed by interactive discussions and activities designed to help pupils explore, analyse and synthesize information. The school has rightly identified the need to structure a programme of continuous professional development to ensure a shared understanding of best practice. Teachers use open-ended questions to make pupils think and check their understanding by asking them to 'narrate' or re-tell what they have learnt. This develops pupils' ability to concentrate, synthesize and articulate. As classes are very small, teachers can easily follow each child and intervene at the right time to facilitate their learning. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of each pupil's prior attainment and aptitudes. Consequently, they plan work that matches pupils' needs closely. In outstanding lessons, teachers provide a consistent level of challenge that stimulates pupils without inhibiting them. In a small minority of satisfactory lessons, teachers talk too much, resulting in less active learning. Teachers use resources very effectively to inspire and captivate pupils, and engage them in learning. For example, in a geography lesson, pupils were absorbed and transported by the good range of high quality resources presented to them to illustrate various aspects of Chinese culture. The school has a well-structured assessment framework that enables it to

monitor each pupil's progress rigorously. Testing is limited to end of term oral examinations during which pupils narrate what they have learnt in response to specific questions, showing what they have assimilated.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The Christian ethos permeates all aspects of school life, beginning with teachers who are excellent role models emphasizing the formation of good habits and good manners. Through daily assemblies and readings from the Bible, pupils learn key moral values and nurture beliefs that will help them to strengthen their moral character and pursue the good. Pupils are encouraged to accept responsibility for their behaviour and in PSHCE, for example, they were involved in agreeing classroom rules. Pupils' social development is good. They form positive relationships and work and play harmoniously in pairs and in groups. Pupils' behaviour is good. Often it is outstanding, but a small minority of pupils do not show the same level of self-discipline as their peers.

Pupils' attitude to school is exceptionally positive, as reflected in their good attendance, excellent work ethics and enjoyment in lessons. They strive to do their best, which is central to the teaching, and present their work very carefully. When asked to explain why they love their school, they say, 'what makes it special is all the outings and nature walks.' Parents agree and one wrote, 'art, music, nature walks and other enrichment activities are woven into the weekly curriculum to provide a holistic approach to learning.' The weekly nature walks help pupils develop a love of nature, understanding of their environment, keen observational skills and a sense of wonder. Year 2 and 3 pupils demonstrated this when painting the leaves which they had collected during their walk, showing an exceptionally good ability to render proportions, colour, shape and texture accurately and sensitively, coupled with a desire to find out more about the trees. Having weekly educational outings enhances pupils' learning in subjects and enables them to familiarise themselves with local venues such as the Botanical Gardens and the Fitzwilliam Museum, creating a habit of lifelong learning.

Pupils are encouraged to contribute to the school, local and international communities. They perform in school plays and visit care homes for the elderly where they recite poems, sing and act scenes. They think of others less fortunate than themselves and learn about other cultures, for example, by sponsoring a young girl in South America. They develop a good understanding of British institutions through the PSHCE programme. From Year 4, pupils learn about the major world religions in a respectful way, which prepares them well for life in a multicultural society.

The curriculum prepares pupils exceptionally well for their future. They learn to concentrate through nature study and picture study. They learn to memorise through the recitation of poetry. The daily practice of narration helps them retain new

knowledge. All this, alongside good academic skills and strong moral values, equips them to grow into proactive and responsible citizens.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Heritage makes outstanding provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. It has robust policies and procedures in place to minimise risks and promote the welfare, health and safety of all pupils at all times. Provision for safeguarding pupils is of a very high standard. Accidents are recorded conscientiously and four teachers have undertaken first aid training. The school has a satisfactory level of fire safety. Consequently, pupils and parents have confidence in the school's procedures for welfare, health and safety and pupils feel very safe and free from bullying. Pupils enjoy healthy lifestyles and appreciate the numerous opportunities for physical exercise. They understand that fruit and vegetables are essential parts of a healthy diet. They move safely around the building and on the playground and follow the Countryside Code on their nature walks.

The school fulfils its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

There are robust procedures in place to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children prior to confirmation of their employment. The implementation of these procedures is monitored effectively through the maintenance of a single central register.

School's premises and accommodation

The Victorian property provides suitable and pleasant teaching accommodation and creates a homely atmosphere in which pupils can flourish. The building is well maintained and kept in a clean and hygienic condition. The playground and local facilities are used effectively to promote healthy physical activity and support the curriculum.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides an extensive range of information for parents and prospective parents mainly through its website. Parents are provided with comprehensive termly written reports on their children's progress, along with detailed end-of-term examination assessments. They also have two formal annual opportunities to consult their children's teachers. As a result, parents feel well informed of what their children can do and need to do to improve.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a suitable procedure for handling complaints fairly and promptly.

Effectiveness of the EYFS

No judgement can be made on the overall effectiveness and leadership of the EYFS as there is no Reception class this academic year. The school is aware that it must implement the new curriculum for EYFS and satisfy all the welfare requirements for EYFS when it re-opens a Reception class. The school assessment records and the samples of work of the children who were in the Reception class last year show that these children achieved well and made at least good progress in literacy and numeracy, and outstanding progress in their personal development. However, as the Reception class was integrated in the main school, the curriculum was not planned fully according to the six areas of learning of the EYFS and the assessment framework did not follow the guidance of the EYFS.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ("the Regulations").

In order to comply with the learning and development requirements of the EYFS, the school must:

- implement fully the new curriculum for the EYFS when it re-opens a Reception class.

In order to comply with the welfare requirements of the EYFS, the school must:

- ensure that it satisfies all the new welfare requirements of the EYFS when it re-opens a Reception class.

What the school could do to improve further

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

- further develop schemes of work for all areas of learning
- structure a programme of continuous professional development for teachers
- broaden the curriculum for the technological area of learning, budget permitting.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

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	✓			
--	---	--	--	--

School details

Name of school	Heritage School		
DCSF number	873/6045		
Unique reference number	135404		
Type of school	Day preparatory school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 2007		
Age range of pupils	4–10 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 13	Girls: 6	Total: 19
Annual fees	£5,685		
Address of school	19 Brookside Cambridge CB2 1JE		
Telephone number	01223 350615		
Email address	office@heritage.org.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Jason Fletcher		
Proprietor	Mr Ranald Macaulay		
Reporting inspector	Mrs Michèle Messaoudi		
Date of inspection	16 September 2008		