

# Hooke Court School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Susan Gadd HMI

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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.<sup>1, 2</sup>

The inspection of registered provision was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.<sup>3, 4</sup>

## Information about the school

Hooke Court School and Wrens Nursery in Beaminster, Dorset together constitute an independent co-educational day school for boys and girls aged two to 11 years old. Both are housed in one building, owned by the same proprietors and run by the same headteacher. Hooke Court School was founded in 1996 while Wrens Nursery opened in 2003. The school is set in 24 acres of parkland in the grounds of Hooke Court. There are now 18 children on the roll of Wrens Nursery, all of whom are in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They all attend part time. The school receives Nursery funding for eight children. In Hooke Court School, there are 14 children aged five to 11. None of the pupils in school has a statement of special educational needs. Pupils have full access to the outdoor resource centre on this site. Wrens Nursery was last inspected in 2006 while Hooke Court was inspected in 2008. The school's aim is to provide 'a happy, caring and stimulating environment where every child enjoys learning and makes the most of the opportunities to them'.

At the time of the current inspection, both the headteacher and deputy headteacher were involved in a charitable event in Africa.

## Evaluation of the school

The school successfully meets its aims and overall provides a good quality of education, with significant improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in welfare, health and safety since the last inspection. Pupils of all ages make good progress as a result of the good curriculum and good teaching. Pupils' exceptional behaviour and outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensure that pupils develop into well-rounded individuals. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage, including the provision for the youngest children, is good. The school takes outstanding steps to ensure that pupils of all ages feel safe

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

<sup>3</sup> Schools which provide childcare for children from birth until the term in which they reach their third birthday must register this provision separately with Ofsted.

<sup>4</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents).

through its regard for their health, welfare and safety and robust arrangements for safeguarding. All the regulations for independent schools are now met, which represents good improvement since the last inspection.

## Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good with some outstanding features. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the curriculum is closely linked to the required statutory curriculum with a good emphasis on first-hand learning experiences. This good curriculum continues into Key Stages 1 and 2. Here the curriculum is closely matched to the National Curriculum and supported by teachers' planning and published resources. Some lessons, such as physical education (PE), French, music and art are taught by specialist teachers. Other lessons, such as literacy, numeracy and science are taught by teachers within the school according to their own specialism. Skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are taught and applied across the curriculum. The school is in the process of extending planned opportunities for pupils to further develop and apply such skills.

The introduction of thematic weeks ensures that pupils appreciate the various links between subjects and this provides a meaningful context in which they are able to develop their understanding of new concepts. Detailed schemes of work, for all subjects, support teachers and the school is now considering how best to 'fine-tune' the progression within these schemes to support the setting of targets for pupils.

An outstanding feature of the curriculum is the range of enrichment activities which provide pupils with memorable and enhancing learning experiences. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about their trip to Germany and other day visits such as the adventure walk to Golden Cap. All pupils greatly benefit from the beautiful, stimulating outdoor learning environment and the many clubs available. This includes the use of local woods, a pond, a reproduction Saxon hut and regular contact with the residential chickens, ducks and pigs. With the support of staff from the resource centre, pupils have exciting opportunities to learn about their natural environment, participate in water sports, such as kayaking and raft building, as well as developing their skills in archery.

Teaching and assessment are good throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils enjoy the many practical learning opportunities. For example, in one class, pupils were learning about the properties of three dimensional shapes by handling everyday objects and identifying their mathematical features. This practical experience, along with small class sizes, good teacher subject knowledge and effective questioning, ensures that pupils make good progress. Much of the marking is effective because it provides pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work. However, this good practice is not always evident in mathematics. Pupils are clear about their targets in literacy and numeracy but the targets are not always specific enough to help them understand the next steps in their learning. Pupils participate well, responding enthusiastically to the good

teaching. Occasionally, during the introduction to lessons, opportunities are missed to engage pupils fully through, for example, the use of 'talk partners'. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills while working in groups to solve practical problems. For example, while building rafts, pupils were able to listen, respond to the views of others and work confidently as a group, so that all members regardless of age made a positive contribution to the challenge. As one parent stated, 'Hooke Court is a unique school. Children are nurtured and encouraged in both their academic and social development.'

An effective regular assessment cycle is in place throughout the school so that pupils' progress can be measured. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers' observations accurately identify children's starting points. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils are assessed in their reading, writing and numeracy through routine tests and teacher assessments. These are used well to guide and inform planning and teaching. Tests and assessment data show that most pupils make good progress regardless of their starting point.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. This is a very small school where all pupils are considered as one family. As one child said, 'I love school!' This highly positive attitude towards school is reflected in pupils' outstanding behaviour and high attendance. Pupils are proud of the many responsibilities they take on around the school, ranging from supporting younger children in reading, becoming fruit monitors or house captains to running the school shop.

Through religious education and other activities, such as visitors to school and raising money for a range of charities, pupils are fully aware of their own and other cultures. In particular, they talk knowledgeably and maturely about the importance that religion plays in peoples' lives and the need to respect differences. Currently, they are eagerly following the travels of the headteacher through Africa, learning a great deal about different cultures. Close links have been established with a school in France and together with trips to countries such as Egypt and Germany, pupils have developed a strong awareness of their place in the world beyond the local community.

Pupils raise money on a regular basis for a range of charities. For example, money is raised by selling the vegetables that they grow to support a child in Nepal to attend school. Locally, pupils contribute to the community in many ways. These include singing in church at Christmas time, donating food at Harvest Festival and running stalls at two local markets throughout the year. As a result, pupils have gained a good appreciation for the world outside school. Pupils learn and understand much about public institutions and services in England through links with local services such as the police, a local veterinary practice and the 'stranger danger' team. In lessons, they develop a good awareness of the role of politicians and have carried

out their own elections when appointing house captains for the school. As a consequence of their outstanding personal development and their good basic skills, pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage in their school life.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

Provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, is outstanding. The procedures that underpin all aspect of pupils' welfare, health and safety, including those for child protection, first aid and fire safety, are extremely well supported by detailed policies and risk assessments which are reviewed on a regular basis. Exceptional pastoral care ensures that this is a community where pupils feel very safe and cared for. At break and lunchtimes, older pupils play with children from the Nursery ensuring that pupils make strong friendships, are happy and no child is isolated or left out.

Welfare training for all staff, including safeguarding, is regularly reviewed and kept up to date. Pupils are fully aware of the importance of staying healthy through regular exercise and healthy eating. They enjoy the fruit provided by the school at break times and the regular exercise from their use of the extensive site.

Parents are overwhelmingly happy with the school and as one parent commented, 'Staff are wonderful and children are caring towards each other. It's an amazing place.'

The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

The school fully implements safe recruitment procedures and carries out all required checks on the suitability of the proprietor and staff to work with children. There is a single central register which is properly maintained. All regulations are met.

## **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The school is situated in the middle of a stunning, historical rural setting which provides a safe, attractive and stimulating environment for pupils of all ages to learn in. The designated outdoor playground, which is separated from the rest of the site, is used by pupils throughout the day. Classrooms are spacious and suitably furnished and well equipped for the differing ages of pupils in the school, including the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. All pupils have access to the outside resources such as use of a playing field, tennis courts, a fishing pond and the low ropes course. This along with the water sports and forest work enables pupils to use the outdoor environment as an additional classroom.

## **Provision of information**

The school has close links with its parents and carers through its 'Parents Liaison Committee' and through regular newsletters and reports on pupils' progress. Information about school policies and procedures is provided to parents and carers through the school website and the school prospectus. The school meets all requirements.

## **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The school's procedures meet all the regulations.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children thoroughly enjoy school and feel very secure. Within a matter of weeks of starting at the Nursery, children have settled confidently due to the great care given to the induction procedures and opportunities, such as the beach barbecue, for all families prior to children starting Nursery. Staff know the children individually and key workers work very effectively with parents and children. As a result, children make good progress and achieve good outcomes in all areas of learning including literacy, numeracy and personal development.

The quality of teaching is good for all children. Gentle but well-focused questioning together with the use of practical equipment means that children are happy to play together, sharing toys and communicating confidently with each other and adults. Although many of the learning opportunities are adult led, children learn well as a result of the enrichment experiences provided through first-hand experiences and, in particular, the use of the outdoor environment. The Nursery is currently expanding its 'forest work programme' to further develop children's nature skills; for example, children were observed listening to the sounds of birds while on one of their many walks around the grounds. Staff are now well into the process of planning and introducing more child-initiated learning for all children across the age range, where children are able to make choices for themselves and develop their independence.

The well-planned curriculum covers literacy and numeracy as well as other required areas of learning. Good emphasis is placed on many opportunities for personal and social development. Adults ensure that planning distinguishes well for the needs of children of differing ages, including the youngest children. Observations are used to inform planning and assessments are ongoing. Children are set individual targets and all adults are increasingly using these to set children's next learning steps.

The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are outstanding because of the uniformly good or better quality of different aspects of the Nursery including the outstanding quality of safeguarding. Self-evaluation is

excellent and clear progression routes exist for adults, with a major emphasis on staff development and training. As a result, children's progress is rapidly improving through, for example, the greater opportunities for outdoor and child-initiated learning. As all risk assessments and policies are of a high standard, and all welfare requirements are met, safeguarding arrangements are outstanding. Parents and carers are effectively involved in their children's learning which ensures that adults have a shared understanding of children's needs, and set high aspirations for each child.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

## **What the school could do to improve further**

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

- Ensure that marking informs pupils how to improve their work, particularly in mathematics.
- Ensure that pupils' targets are more specific and measurable.

## 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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### The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	✓			
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		

## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Preparatory day		
<b>Date school opened</b>	September 1996		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–11		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 8	Girls: 6	Total: 14
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 7	Girls: 11	Total: 18
<b>Number of children aged 0–3 in registered childcare provision</b>	Boys:6	Girls:10	Total:16
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£1,680		
<b>Annual fees (childcare)</b>	£606		
<b>Address of school</b>	Hook, Beaminster, Dorset DT8 3NX		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01308 862260		
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:sarah@hookecourt.co.uk">sarah@hookecourt.co.uk</a> <a href="mailto:info@hookecourt.co.uk">info@hookecourt.co.uk</a>		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs S McConnell		
<b>Proprietors</b>	Mrs M Cooper, Mr P Cooper, Mrs S McConnell, Mrs E Ford, Mr D Cooper		

**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.**

23 September 2011

Dear Pupils



**Inspection of Hooke Court School, Hooke, Beaminster, Dorset DT8 3NX**

As you know, I visited your school recently with one other inspector. We would like to thank those of you who talked to us about your work and life at the school. We really enjoyed meeting you all, your teachers and everyone else who works in the school. Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming; you made our visit very enjoyable. We found your school provides you with a good quality of education.

These are some of the best things about your school.

- You all make good progress in your work and really enjoy coming to school.
- It is a very happy place where you feel exceptionally safe, enjoy your lessons and get on well with each other.
- You know how to keep safe and healthy, and you enjoy taking lots of exercise.
- You have very strong values and beliefs and are keen to learn about a range of cultures.
- The school makes every effort to make your curriculum fun through providing day visits to places of interest, trips abroad and through the exciting opportunities to learn about nature and the use of the wonderful outside resources on your site.
- The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. All adults know you well and take great care of you.

We have asked your school to do the following things.

- Make sure that your targets are very clear to help improve your learning.
- Ensure that marking always helps you all to understand how to improve your work, particularly in mathematics.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Susan Gadd  
Her Majesty's Inspector

