



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Material Change Inspection Report

Griffin House School

July 2023

School's details

School name	Griffin House Preparatory School			
DfE number	825/6023			
Address	Griffin House Preparatory School Little Kimble Aylesbury Buckinghamshire HP17 0XP			
Telephone number	01844 346154			
Email address	secretary@griffinhouseschool.co.uk			
Headteacher	Miss Helen Milnes			
Chair of governors	Mrs Vivianne Thompson			
Proprietor	Chatsworth Schools			
Age Range	3 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	177			
	EYFS	37	Juniors	140
Date of inspection	4 July 2023			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Griffin House Preparatory School is an independent co-educational day school. Since 1939, the school has occupied a large Victorian property set in five acres of grounds. The school includes an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting. In January 2019, the school was acquired by Chatsworth Schools which provides the school's governing body. The school has 51 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or difficulties, of whom 3 have an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language for 6 pupils. The school's previous inspection was a focused compliance and educational quality inspection in February 2020, followed by a progress monitoring visit in March 2021.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.2 This was an announced material change inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to assess the school's proposal to increase its total number of pupils from 176 to 240. During the inspection, the school signalled its intention to implement the proposed increase in two stages, firstly to a total of 200 pupils, then subsequently to a revised total of 252 pupils, consequent on a planned extension to the west elevation of the property. The inspection focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs) and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 11 (health and safety)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 12 (fire safety)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision of pupils)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment)	Met
Part 4, paragraphs 18–21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors)	Met
Part 5, paragraphs 23–29 (premises and accommodation)	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management)	Met

2. Inspection findings

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7]

Safeguarding policy

- 2.1 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.2 The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.

Safeguarding implementation

- 2.3 The school meets the standard.
- 2.4 Implementation of all aspects of the school's safeguarding procedures is effective in providing appropriate support for the needs of pupils, including for children in the EYFS. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.
- 2.5 Staff, including senior leaders, listen to the concerns of pupils effectively. Pupils confirmed this to be the case and say that the school responds to any issues promptly and takes action when necessary. Records, which are suitably thorough, show that the school communicates and refers concerns swiftly and appropriately, including to pertinent external agencies when appropriate. The safeguarding team seeks advice when necessary. The school liaises appropriately with parents about any safeguarding concerns. Pupils are taught how to stay safe online and the school has appropriate controls of the use of technology.
- 2.6 The safeguarding policy gives contact details as required for local safeguarding partners. The training for those with specific safeguarding responsibilities is in line with local requirements and statutory advice and is up to date. Staff confirm that they are trained regularly. There are comprehensive records of face to face and online training which confirm suitable courses have been completed. Staff demonstrate effective knowledge of safeguarding procedures, including most recent changes to statutory guidance. They are aware of how to listen to children and report any concerns that they have.
- 2.7 Leaders and staff demonstrate appropriate awareness of the staff code of conduct, including the low-level concerns policy and safeguarding procedures, and are confident to use them. They have a suitable knowledge of the thresholds for reporting issues or incidents.
- 2.8 Suitable arrangements for handling allegations against staff or senior leaders, and potential misconduct, are included in safeguarding procedures; they include seeking immediate advice from the local authority designated safeguarding officer (LADO). The school understands its role in reporting any person to relevant regulatory bodies if circumstances require it.
- 2.9 Governors are trained appropriately in safeguarding. A governor with appropriate expertise maintains a close working contact with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL). Governors are suitably pro-active in the school with regards to monitoring safeguarding policies and procedures, including through arrangements for an annual review.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – health and safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 11]

- 2.10 The school meets the standard.
- 2.11 The proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy. Records show that testing of electrical, water and other utilities is regularly undertaken. Staff are effectively trained in health and safety and

deal promptly and appropriately with accidents if they occur, including through the reporting of serious accidents. Systematic records ensure that any trends in issues pertinent to health and safety are identified and suitable steps are taken to mitigate any recurrence. Health and safety considerations have been integrated effectively into the planning of the refurbishment and repurposing of the current premises. They have also been considered effectively in initial consideration of the proposed extension. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – fire safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 12]

2.12 The school meets the standard.

2.13 The school has a fire safety policy which includes the elimination or reduction of risks from dangerous substances. A fire risk assessment of all current buildings has been undertaken by a suitably qualified person. Fire procedures are understood by, and training provided for, staff. Termly fire drills are carried out and recorded and pupils are suitably informed about evacuation procedures. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – supervision of pupils [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 14]

2.14 The school meets the standard.

2.15 Pupils are properly supervised by qualified and trained staff, including at break times and in outside play. There are suitable ratios of staff and pupils in the EYFS. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16]

2.16 The school meets the standard.

2.17 The school's risk assessment policy clearly describes appropriate lines of responsibility for risk assessment and suitable approaches to be taken to identify and mitigate risk. There are appropriate assessments of risk for premises, in-school activities, school visits, and for the needs of individual pupils. The required daily risk assessments in the EYFS are carried out effectively. Suitable action is taken to mitigate risks identified. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18–21]

2.18 The school meets the standards.

2.19 All the required checks on staff and governors are carried out and completed before they take up their posts. Contractors send the school up-to-date information on checks they have undertaken on their employees, and the school makes appropriate further checks on arrival. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.

2.20 The school maintains correctly an accurate single central register of appointments (SCR) which includes the dates on which all checks have been completed. Recent errors evident in a small number of checks recorded in the SCR had been recognised and corrected by the school in advance of the inspection.

Premises and accommodation [ISSR Part 5, paragraphs 23 to 29]

- 2.21 The school meets the standards.
- 2.22 Suitable toilet and changing facilities and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; and water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play. The provision, including a planned extension subsequent to planning approval, is likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.

Provision of information [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c)]

- 2.23 The school meets the requirements for providing information relating to safeguarding to parents. Particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding are published on the school's website.

Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34]

- 2.24 The school meets the standard.
- 2.25 Senior leaders and governors monitor safeguarding and welfare arrangements and carry out effective oversight of compliance with the regulatory standards. Where errors are found they ensure these are remedied effectively. They fulfil their responsibilities so that independent school standards are met consistently. Measures planned for the proposed increase in pupil numbers are likely to ensure that the school still actively promotes the wellbeing of pupils.

3. Recommendation with regard to material change inspection

Recommendation

- 3.1 The school's request to increase its total pupil capacity to 252 is likely to meet requirements with regard to most of the regulations which were the focus of this inspection. This proposed increase would be dependent on planning permission being granted for a planned extension to the west elevation of the school and suitable building plans being implemented successfully.
- 3.2 It is recommended that, from September 2023, an interim increase in pupil numbers to 200 be approved.

4. Summary of evidence

- 4.1 The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with a governor. She visited different areas of the school and talked with a group of pupils. She scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.

Inspectors

Mrs Sue Clarke

Reporting inspector