

School inspection report

12 to 14 March 2024

Griffin House Preparatory School

Station Road

Little Kimble

Buckinghamshire

HP17 0XP

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Directors ensure that regular reviews of school processes take place, which has helped to identify key areas for future school development. Leaders monitor the application of policies and provide effective support to school leaders. Leaders from all the Chatsworth group schools have opportunities to share practice and this helps the leaders at Griffin House to develop their skills and knowledge further, to carry out their duties effectively and promote the wellbeing of pupils.
2. Leaders and directors prioritise curriculum development and behaviour management as areas of initial primary focus following effective self-review. Leaders are aware of the need to monitor teaching so that more consistent approaches are common across the school and support pupils to make further progress.
3. Pupils make good overall progress from their starting points. Regular assessment provides leaders with information about pupils' individual and group attainment and this is reviewed to support provision for pupils not meeting expectations or those requiring additional learning support. This information is disseminated but not used effectively in combination with teachers' own assessments when planning lessons. Pupils are not consistently challenged, and so the progress they make is inconsistent.
4. The school values are reflected in the everyday language of the classroom, displays and assembly themes. They are well known and pupils try to enact them by having integrity, showing resilience and respect to all in their own and the wider community.
5. Pupils develop effective speaking skills and a love of reading. This is as a result of the focus on teaching phonics through the early years and a continued emphasis on communication skills.
6. Recent initiatives in implementing the new behaviour policy support pupils to make positive choices. Teachers are less consistent in using the behaviour policy when poor choices are made. Pupils do not consistently develop an understanding of the consequences of their actions and how they impact on others.
7. Lessons in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education link with other areas of learning to support pupils in understanding the importance of respect and tolerance for all and in appreciating the breadth of cultural influences in British society. Changes to the PSHE curriculum have not been monitored to assess the impact on supporting pupils to form positive relationships.
8. Safeguarding is well led and is effective. There are well defined structures and systems in place which are frequently monitored to ensure that appropriate action is taken when concerns arise. Pupils feel safe in school.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that the recently reviewed behaviour policy is effectively implemented in managing low-level off task behaviour
- ensure teachers consistently use pupils' prior knowledge and abilities to set high expectations when planning lessons, enabling pupils to progress further
- monitor the changes in the delivery of the PSHE curriculum to ensure consistency in teaching and assessment of learning over time.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Directors have an effective process in place to review school procedures. The headteacher together with the senior leadership team have a clear vision for the future development of the school. While many of these initiatives are in their infancy, pupils' wellbeing is at the forefront of all changes.
10. Directors review leaders' improvement plans regularly to ensure that those in positions of responsibility have the skills and knowledge to fulfil their roles and that actions have the desired consistent outcomes on raising pupils' achievement. For example, directors have appointed teachers as subject leaders who have the necessary skills to implement planned changes to the curriculum.
11. Early years leaders work closely with teachers to deliver a curriculum that caters to children's interests and needs as well as covering all areas of early learning. Leaders analyse children's progress and use the information they gather to inform the early years development plan.
12. School policies are regularly reviewed and follow the template set by directors for all Chatsworth schools, whilst being adapted where necessary to meet the requirements of the school, personnel and facilities. School policies are detailed, comprehensive, fully in line with requirements, and suitably underpin all procedures.
13. Directors visit the school frequently to quality assure a particular area of focus, which include the early years, safeguarding, provision of information and school site matters. These visits are supplemented by online forum meetings and reports from the headteacher. Governors have relevant experience and training, including in safeguarding, and offer suitable support and challenge so that Standards are met.
14. Parents may access all the necessary information via the school website and newsletters. Leaders ensure that the school complies with its duties regarding the Equality Act by implementing a comprehensive disability action plan. This is specific about how the curriculum and site are adjusted to cater for the needs of pupils at the school. Educational, health and care plans are appropriately reviewed and the school reports to the local authority about how funding is used to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
15. Appropriate records of complaints are kept and regularly reviewed. Leaders take swift action in response to complaints in line with the school's complaints policy.
16. Directors and leaders are aware of the importance of considering risk when implementing change and in planning school processes and procedures. There is a suitable risk assessment policy in place with appropriate supportive individual risk assessments created when needed. The open site has been reviewed and new and appropriate processes to support site safety are in place.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

- 17. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

18. Teachers are encouraged to make links between different subjects when planning. This enhances and contextualises pupils' knowledge and develops their linguistic skills. It also enables pupils to apply their writing skills in a wide range of contexts. Pupils understand why it is important to be able to identify and use different writing genres. For example, pupils apply their skills in humanities topics, by writing a biography about historical figures.
19. Teachers plan lessons which enable pupils to have many opportunities to discuss and explain their ideas. This helps pupils to be articulate and they listen attentively when they are interested in the content of the lesson. Younger pupils enjoy learning new French vocabulary and extend their linguistic skills through well-chosen and appropriate activities.
20. The well-resourced science room is used effectively, so that pupils gain science knowledge and investigation skills appropriate to their age. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge well to encourage pupils to use science specific vocabulary when explaining their ideas. Equally in art, pupils have many opportunities to develop appropriate creative skills when using different media in art projects.
21. Teachers and teaching assistants in the early years are enthusiastic and have expert knowledge of how young children learn. They know children's individual abilities and interests and use this knowledge effectively to plan interesting activities to help children to learn well. Children stay on task and try new things. They enjoy learning to read and make progress in learning letter sounds. Consequently, children develop their reading and writing skills. Teachers support children to quickly develop self-care skills and independence.
22. When lessons in the pre-prep and prep school are planned to make effective use of time, pupils make good progress in acquiring new knowledge and skills. However, teachers do not systematically use pupils' prior knowledge when planning lessons and this affects the progress that some pupils are able to make, especially those who could achieve even more.
23. The attainment of pupils in subjects, including PSHE, is regularly assessed by teachers and this information is used to inform reporting. Leaders are in the process of reviewing how all the assessment data can be more effectively used when planning lessons to support and challenge pupils.
24. Teachers do not always have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. When the pace of lessons slows and expectations are low, some pupils find it harder to concentrate and focus. This limits the progress pupils can make.
25. Teachers plan lessons so pupils' mathematical skills are built sequentially. Teaching assistants are used effectively in lessons or for support groups, so that pupils who find concepts more difficult can make good progress.
26. There is a comprehensive system to regularly assess pupils' reading, writing and numeracy knowledge and understanding. Academic leaders check pupils' progress and identify pupils who may need additional support. Targeted support is in place for pupils who have SEND so they can make the best possible progress from their starting points.

27. All pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) already have functional English and make good progress from their starting points. Teachers provide suitable support for pupils who speak EAL. For example, pupils are provided with strategies such as word mats in class to support their learning.
28. Pupils apply the skills taught in the curriculum or develop new interests such as in judo, coding or Japanese in a variety of clubs and after school activities. Leaders have recently reviewed the provision of clubs and provide a broader range of activities particularly for sporting opportunities.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

- 29. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

30. The behaviour policy was implemented after consultation with pupils, staff and parents. Leaders effectively monitor trends and patterns in any reported behaviour and any bullying incidents. Leaders take appropriate action to ensure that pupils can learn in a safe and calm environment. Cases of bullying are rare and are dealt with promptly and in line with school policy.
31. Low level disruptive behaviour interrupts some lessons in the prep and pre-prep school because teachers do not consistently apply the behaviour policy. A newly introduced structure of rewards supports pupils to make positive choices and has a positive impact on the school culture and on the behaviour of younger pupils.
32. Leaders have reviewed and changed how PSHE lessons including relationships education is delivered. Class teachers who know pupils well teach PSHE, but leaders do not monitor the impact of the changes in the curriculum. This leads to inconsistencies in the approach across the school.
33. Pupils are taught about all the major faiths. Pupils and their parents are involved in assemblies where they talk about their own celebrations and religious festivals. Pupils gain an understanding of the diversity of belief in world religions and learn to respect the beliefs of others. Teachers ensure that all pupils have opportunities to build their self-confidence through the many opportunities to perform in concerts, plays, church services, in music and tea or through participation in drama examinations.
34. High priority is given to the promotion of pupils' mental wellbeing both within the school and through the 'Chatsworth Tapestry' program of work. The 'Chatsworth Tapestry' is integrated through subjects but particularly into PSHE so that pupils begin to develop strategies to support their mental health. There are dedicated spaces in school as a wellbeing corner, for pupils to use as a quiet space. Wellbeing nurture groups further support pupils' individual needs.
35. Pupils build their resilience in lessons, for example, in mathematics, pupils learn to check and reflect on their work, so that they can correct any mistakes. In science, pupils gain appropriate knowledge which helps them to make healthy food choices and pupils learn about the importance of keeping healthy in PSHE.
36. Pupils are active during well-planned sports lessons, where they build their physical knowledge and skills. Intervention sessions support individual pupils in building core strength when this need is identified. Pupils have further opportunities to explore different physical activities and interests in clubs.
37. Leaders and managers have effective arrangements and measures in place to ensure safety within the school with regards to minimising the risk from fire. Recommendations from the fire risk assessment are fully acted on. There are detailed records of fire evacuations and testing of fire prevention and safety equipment.
38. The school premises are suitably maintained and clear records are kept ensuring all health and safety issues are addressed. Effective arrangements are in place to monitor and review health and safety procedures.

39. Admissions information and attendance registers are suitably maintained. Attendance is monitored for any gaps and trends in absence and leaders take the necessary actions to follow up and report any issues to the local authority as required.
40. There are effective systems in place for administering first aid and medicines, overseen by suitably trained staff. Medicines are securely and safely stored in the suitable first aid area. Appropriate written records are kept, including reporting of any serious accidents as required. All staff are paediatric first aid trained.
41. Appropriate supervision rotas are in place and staff understand and carry out their responsibilities well. Effective procedures are in place to support appropriate supervision at pupil drop off times.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

- 42. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

43. Leaders have improved the teaching of personal, social and emotional development in the early years. Children gain the skills they need to develop their behaviour, improve social interaction and to transition well from Reception to Year 1.
44. Teachers make effective links between areas of the curriculum, which supports pupils to have a good understanding of world cultures. For example, Year 6 pupils link with a school in Tanzania as part of the humanities and English curriculum. Pupils value learning about other cultures and appreciate the opportunity to share experiences via video link. Pupils have also been supported in establishing French pen pals, to exchange cultural experiences. Pupils enjoy sharing and hearing about different family cultural traditions of their peers, in class and assembly.
45. The 'Chatsworth Tapestry' programme supports pupils to understand economic influences and terms such as profit and loss. Pupils build entrepreneurial skills for life and learn that their ideas have value in wider society. They have the opportunity to compete with the other schools, for example, a pupil competition to plan and build a prototype of something which will make the world a better place.
46. Teachers look for opportunities and experiences to support the teaching of British values in the PSHE curriculum. Pupils can express their opinions on many aspects of school life including about what they would like to learn in their topics. Pupils exercise their democratic rights in lobbying for equal access to rugby and hockey for both male and female pupils. These sports have recently been introduced into the PE curriculum. Pupils visit the houses of parliament and speak to local representatives, thereby gaining an understanding of local institutions and how laws are made.
47. Through themes discussed in assembly and the focus on school values, pupils understand that they should be tolerant of different views and opinions. Schemes of work and texts used across different subjects, provide opportunities for pupils to learn about how people should be respected regardless of any difference.
48. Chatsworth directors have introduced initiatives across the school to promote a culture of tolerance. Teachers use texts, resources and other strategies to promote a culture of anti-racism. Pupils can identify and explain the groups in society who have specific characteristics protected by law and understand that all should be respected.
49. Pupils are given several opportunities for leadership in the school. For example, pupil wellbeing ambassadors are available at play times to support younger pupils and classes vote for pupils to represent them in school and eco councils. Pupils initiate changes to the school environment, for example by planning a sensory garden. Pupils take part in charitable fundraising events in houses and through whole school events which helps them to appreciate how they can support others.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

50. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

51. Suitable procedures to promote the safety and welfare of pupils are in place. Safeguarding arrangements are formally reviewed annually by Chatsworth directors, all of whom are appropriately trained.
52. Appropriate governance is available across the group of schools for additional support when needed. There are regular forums for all designated safeguarding leads and actions are reported to governors. This structure is effective as there is regular monitoring, sharing of good practice and a focus on supporting pupils' wellbeing.
53. Directors visit the school regularly to support with staff training, including in safer recruitment. The record of school appointments is regularly checked which ensures it is maintained as required and suitable recruitment procedures and checks on adults are in place.
54. The school safeguarding policy is thorough and is aligned to all relevant legislation and guidance. It gives staff suitable advice on reporting whistleblowing, low-level concerns about adults and also includes the staff code of conduct.
55. Records are monitored to keep track of all relevant staff training, including appropriate arrangements for the induction of new staff. Staff knowledge is regularly tested, including responses to concerns relating to extremism and child-on-child abuse. This ensures that all staff are up to date in their understanding of school and local authority procedures.
56. Experienced leaders responsible for safeguarding keep suitable safeguarding records, which are used to monitor and support pupils and identify any trends. Partner agencies are contacted when necessary, and the safeguarding team ask for advice when applicable.
57. Pupils are easily able to raise any worries or concerns, as they know when to go to trusted adults. Their concerns are listened to and promptly acted on by appropriately trained staff. Teachers are also alert to signs which may indicate safeguarding concerns.
58. There are suitable opportunities for pupils to learn how they can keep themselves and others safe, including when online. The school has appropriate safety infrastructure in place to filter and monitor pupils' activities when using computers.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

59. **All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	Griffin House Preparatory School
Department for Education number	825/6023
Address	Station Road Little Kimble Bucks HP17 0XP
Phone number	01844 346154
Email address	secretary@griffinhouseschool.co.uk
Website	www.griffinhouseschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Chatsworth Schools
Chair	Mrs Vivianne Thompson
Headteacher	Mrs Joanna Leach
Age range	3-11 years
Number of pupils	177
Date of previous inspection	4 July 2023

Information about the school

60. Griffin House Preparatory School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged from three to eleven years. Since January 2019, the school has been owned and overseen by Chatsworth Schools Ltd, which provides the school's governing body of nine members.
61. There are 31 children in the early years in two classes. There are 16 children in preschool and 15 children in the reception class.
62. The school has identified 42 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There are five pupils in the school who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
63. English is an additional language for 42 pupils. There are no pupils who are acquiring English as an additional language and need specific support.
64. The school states its aims are to provide a vibrant, broad and balanced experience/curriculum that allows all children to learn, enjoy and excel mentally, spiritually and academically. To provide individualised learning through caring, child-focused teaching, ensuring all children reach their true academic potential. To equip the children with the attitudes, skills and values which will allow them to flourish and take a positive role in their own futures. To provide a happy, safe and nurturing environment for children where they feel secure and valued. To ensure that the children are confident, inquisitive, responsible, kind and independent learners. To value and embrace diversity and be an inclusive school where everyone feels welcome, free to be themselves and has an equal sense of belonging. To ensure that the Griffin House core values of integrity, resilience, passion and respect underpins the life of the school.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

12 to 14 March 2024

65. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

66. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

67. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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