

The Drive Preparatory School

Independent school standard inspection report

DfE registration number	846/6020
Unique Reference Number (URN)	131127
Inspection number	361370
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Michèle Messaoudi

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No. 090070

© Crown copyright 2011



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.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

The Drive Preparatory School is a non-selective co-educational primary and secondary school that opened in 1996 as a preparatory school for children aged from three to fourteen years. It extended its age range to 16 years in 2002. It occupies two large houses that are within a short walk of each other on two sites on a main residential road in Hove. There are currently 61 pupils on roll, aged from eight to sixteen years. Pupils are taught in small teaching groups of a maximum of twelve pupils and there are two mixed-age classes. The school supports a number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, four of whom have a statement of special educational needs. Pupils have diverse cultural and ethnic heritages and four are at various advanced stages of speaking English as an additional language. Most pupils come from the local area. The school had its last inspection in October 2007. It aims to, 'in a caring and safe environment, help children become successful learners, confident in becoming responsible citizens and effective contributors to society.'

Evaluation of the school

The Drive Preparatory School provides a good quality of education and meets its aims. A parent echoes the views of the majority when saying, 'Teaching staff demonstrate great devotion to pupils; my child is motivated to learn and enjoys school.' The good curriculum places a great emphasis on pupils' personal development and well-being and so their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, as is their behaviour. Good teaching and excellent day-to-day care ensure that pupils make good progress in their learning. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and the provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. The school has rectified all the areas of non-compliance identified in the last inspection and now meets all of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The good curriculum is exemplary in its breadth and balance and so provides each pupil with opportunities to find something at which they can excel. From Key Stage 2, it includes French and Spanish in addition to all the subjects of the National

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

Curriculum. In Key Stage 4, the curriculum widens further and pupils have a choice of 19 subjects at GCSE level, including a compulsory core of English, mathematics and science. The school also supports a very small minority of pupils who work towards entry level certificates in vocational subjects. There is appropriate emphasis on literacy throughout the school, and pupils' speaking, listening and reading skills are promoted extremely well, which serves the needs of pupils who have linguistic or learning difficulties particularly effectively. However, pupils' writing skills are not promoted to the same excellent degree and, in some subjects, there are missed opportunities for extended writing. Provision for developing numeracy skills is good and is enhanced by a clear focus on problem solving in Key Stages 2 and 3. Pupils' scientific knowledge and skills are extended well by ecology lessons and activities. The performing arts is a strength throughout the school and pupils achieve very well in local drama and speech competitions. The teaching of music has much improved since the last inspection through the creation of a well-resourced specialist room and is now very good. Provision for art is outstanding and high quality artwork is displayed around the school. The programme of physical education has widened and is now good for all age groups. Virtual learning facilities have recently expanded and pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) daily as a learning tool in addition to their weekly ICT lessons. Personal, social and health education is strong, with a great emphasis on pupils' well-being. Pupils receive good guidance to help them make choices for the future. The curriculum is enriched effectively by a broad range of educational visits, after-school clubs and projects.

Schemes of work and short-term plans support the teaching effectively and indicate how pupils will progress in their learning. However, the coverage of the curriculum in the two mixed-age classes is not recorded in a way that clearly indicates that individual pupils will progress in their learning from year to year without unnecessary repetition. Early identification of pupils' needs enables the school to personalise the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who speak English as an additional language, and those who are gifted and talented.

Teaching and assessment are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and successfully motivate pupils to learn by exciting their curiosity and valuing their views. They build carefully on what pupils already know by asking open-ended questions that stimulate them, make them think deeply and increase their understanding of the subject matter. Teaching groups are small, and teachers are attentive to individual pupils' particular needs and give them good in-class and one-to-one support when needed. They use resources effectively to support pupils' learning. Where the teaching is outstanding, it communicates enthusiasm, moves pupils' learning on at a good pace and provides a consistently high level of challenge. Consequently, pupils are totally absorbed in their learning, seek to excel and make outstanding progress. However, occasionally, the teaching is merely satisfactory when it does not sufficiently check on pupils' learning and so does not meet their individual needs closely. There is a suitable assessment framework to assess pupils' learning and monitor their progress. Pupils gain a good understanding of how to improve through verbal feedback, constructive marking, learning targets and informative subject reports. However, the best practice seen in marking and setting

learning targets is not established in all subjects throughout the school. Consequently, in a few subjects, pupils do not always make as much progress as they could.

As a direct consequence of the good curriculum and teaching, pupils make good progress in their learning over time, including those who have linguistic or learning difficulties; some make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points. Pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development, as noted by many parents. All move on to a sixth form or college.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their attitudes to school are exceptionally positive, as reflected in their good attendance, their very high levels of participation in class and the affection and pride with which they talk of their school. One pupil eloquently captures the sentiment of many when saying, 'All the teachers respect, accept who I am and who everyone is; my school is the best!' Pupils develop an acute sense of responsibility and respect for themselves, others and their environment. They take the initiative to help others whenever they can and do so in a sensitive and courteous way. They demonstrate very high levels of self-discipline and their behaviour is outstanding. They have numerous opportunities for reflection and intellectual development, for example when Year 8 and 9 pupils consider how the Br'er Rabbit folk tales might have been interpreted by North American slaves and by their white masters. They are articulate and self-confident. The very positive relationships which they have with others reflect their strong commitment to equality and diversity.

Pupils develop a good awareness of their roles as citizens through the school council and through their contributions to their school and to the wider community. They recycle paper, which is then used in art. They enjoy participating in school plays, musicals and concerts. They raise funds for local and national charities. They take part in an Oxfam project that encourages them to grow plants for food. They have written letters to British soldiers posted overseas. Pupils' cultural development is enriched well by educational visits, including residential visits, and after-school clubs that extend their creative, communication and physical skills. Their multicultural awareness has improved since the last inspection; they learn about the major world religions in a way that promotes tolerance and social harmony. Logic activities, planned through several subjects, contribute to refining their analytical skills. The wide range of basic skills and personal qualities which they develop prepares them extremely well for their future.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school has rectified all the deficiencies highlighted in the last inspection and now makes good provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. All the required policies and procedures aimed at minimising risks in all circumstances and promoting pupils' well-being are up to date and are implemented consistently. Safeguarding

arrangements are robust. The school obtains appropriate references on all staff. Staff receive the appropriate level of training in child protection; their knowledge of what to do should a concern arise is supported effectively by a detailed and clear safeguarding policy. The school successfully promotes extremely high standards of behaviour and self-discipline, and instances of bullying are rare. Pupils feel extremely well cared for and consequently they feel safe. The quality of risk assessments of activities and premises ranges from satisfactory to good. Registers are maintained properly.

Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily and learn about healthy lifestyles through the curriculum. Pupils of all ages enjoy a wide range of physical activities, which is a good improvement since the last inspection. The school fulfils its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

Rigorous recruitment procedures ensure that all the required checks are carried out on staff and the proprietor to ascertain their suitability to work with children prior to confirming their employment. These checks are recorded meticulously in a detailed single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The proprietor has remedied all the deficiencies identified in the last inspection. Consequently, the premises now enable safe, secure and effective indoor and outdoor teaching and learning. Spacious facilities for art have been created in the premises formerly used as a nursery. The school makes effective use of local sports facilities.

Provision of information

The school has improved the quality of information provided to parents and others and now meets all of the requirements in this respect. Parents feel well informed of their children's progress and receive accurate and up-to-date information, mainly through the school website, newsletters and daily contact.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

There are suitable procedures to handle complaints fairly and promptly.

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.

- Record curriculum coverage in a way that clearly indicates that individual pupils in mixed-age classes will progress in their learning from year to year without unnecessary repetition.
- Ensure that pupils are consistently challenged to produce high quality writing in all subjects.
- Help pupils accelerate their progress further through the consistent use of learning targets and constructive marking so that they gain a clearer understanding of what to do next to improve.

Inspection judgements

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

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Co-educational primary and secondary school		
Date school opened	1996		
Age range of pupils	8–16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 36	Girls: 25	Total: 61
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 2	Girls: 2	Total: 4
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,885 - £5,850		
Address of school	101 The Drive, Hove, East Sussex BN3 3JE		
Telephone number	01273 738444		
Email address	sue@driveprep.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Parkinson		
Proprietor	Mr Nick Faulkner		