

Gracefield Preparatory School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	John Seal 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.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Gracefield is an independent primary school for girls and boys aged from four to eleven years. Situated in Fishponds, in the east of the City of Bristol, the school occupies a detached Victorian house. The school opened in 1950 and is registered for 112 pupils. Currently there are 90 on roll. This includes 15 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, all of whom are funded under the government's nursery scheme. None attend part time. The school is currently organised into seven classes, one for each year group. None of the pupils have a statement of special educational needs and no children are looked after. The majority of pupils are White British with a small proportion from a diverse range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Three pupils speak English as an additional language. The school states that it aims to 'prepare each child for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life'. This is the school's third full Ofsted inspection. The last inspection was in September 2009.

Evaluation of the school

Gracefield School provides a good quality of education and meets its aims well. All regulatory requirements are met, which is an improvement from the last inspection. All children make good progress because of the good teaching and assessment supported by a good curriculum. Provision for welfare, health and safety, including safeguarding arrangements, is good. Strengths throughout the school include outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and outstanding behaviour. The school has addressed the two areas for further improvement identified in the previous report effectively.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. Policies are up to date and relevant. All subjects have clear plans which provide good coverage of the activities undertaken across the school. Long- and medium-term schemes of work are broadly based on the National Curriculum organised into a broad range of topics and themes. The school has updated its Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum effectively to meet recent changes. Children in Reception have regular well-planned learning activities outdoors, an improvement since the last inspection. Additional subjects of French

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

and Spanish are also appropriately planned and are taught effectively by specialist teachers. Basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are well covered for all pupils. Their skills in handwriting, spelling and written presentation are better than typically seen for their age and contribute well to their preparation for later life. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is a strength of the school. It is taught in discrete topics and also interwoven with other subjects where relevant. Physical education (PE) is very well organised and provision is a strong feature of school life. Although all subjects are planned and covered effectively, the school is still in the early stages of matching different tasks and activities more closely to pupils' needs. For example, in some topic lessons seen, pupils were observed taking part in exactly the same activity regardless of their skills or abilities. Effective support is provided for pupils identified as having a disability or with special needs and for those who speak English as an additional language. Some have individual education plans through which their progress is monitored. Pupils have many opportunities to visit the local park and leisure centre. Other physical activities include football, cricket, rounders, netball and swimming. The school runs a variety of clubs after school. This includes computers, construction and Nippy Netballers. The curriculum is suitably enriched with regular visits for all pupils. These include organised visits to aquariums, Victorian, Roman and Tudor museums and, more locally, to visit the Bristol science museum. Visitors include authors and parents and carers who talk about their countries of origin. A highlight for Year 6 pupils is the long residential weekend.

Teaching and assessment are good. Provision is not outstanding because teaching and curriculum provision do not lead to outstanding outcomes. The quality of lessons from Reception to Year 6 is never less than satisfactory, the majority are good and on occasions, outstanding. Senior managers have well established plans for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching to ensure that it is effective. In the lessons that are very well taught, teachers use their plans well and tell pupils what they are going to learn. Assessment information and pupils' prior learning are used effectively to plan activities that closely match pupils' differing learning needs and abilities. Teachers' good questioning challenges pupils' thinking and secures pupils' understanding and knowledge well. A good example of this was seen in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, where pupils were investigating cubed numbers. Teachers are beginning to use National Curriculum levels to good effect to provide pupils with clear targets and to identify next steps in their learning. As a result of these effective strategies, most pupils make good progress and are aware of their targets. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers carry out accurate focused assessments and observations. They skilfully question children during activities in order to re-shape tasks and provide explanations to improve their learning. All teachers have the highest expectations of what pupils are capable of, but some are still developing their practice in gauging the range and standard of work of pupils to ensure it accurately matches their needs. In the few satisfactory lessons, assessment information is not consistently used by teachers in a refined enough way to ensure work is properly matched to the pupils' capabilities. Consequently, some children find the work too easy and others too hard. In addition, some teachers direct the learning to such a degree that pupils have limited opportunities to make as much progress as

they are capable of. On occasions, this leads to slower progress, especially for the more able pupils.

Assessment is good. Since the last inspection, the school has further developed its system for tracking the progress of all pupils in all subjects. The progress of a class or group can be evaluated, which is an improvement from the previous inspection. This information provides an accurate picture of progress in each year group. In the Reception class, children's progress in the revised areas of learning are recorded securely and used to plan further activities. However, teachers are still refining their use of this information in their planning to ensure that pupils are provided with work that challenges them to make even better progress. Marking in most subjects is regular and up to date. Comments about next steps for improvement are beginning to be seen more widely.

Pupils' progress is good. Standards in reading are a particular strength and pupils told inspectors about their love of books and stories. Those pupils who read to an inspector did so with confidence and fluency. From work seen in lessons, pupils' books and the school's assessment information, pupils make good progress in most subjects from when they start in Reception, through to the end of Key Stage 2. Many of them start in Year 1, with standards in reading, writing and mathematics which are above those expected for their age. A good proportion of them are well above age expectations by the time they leave the school in Year 6. However, the school recognises that as the assessment systems become more effective more pupils will make even better progress. Almost all pupils enter the secondary schools of their parents' choice.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is outstanding. The school has close and productive relationships with parents and carers. The significant majority of parents and carers who responded to the on-line questionnaire were highly positive about the school and its work. There is a warm, friendly atmosphere which is reflected in the bright, colourful and well-organised building. Pupils' attendance is consistently good. Their behaviour is outstanding. This is seen from the very youngest to the oldest. At playtimes and around the school, all pupils are self-assured, happy and get on with each other in a tolerant and harmonious manner. Pupils told inspectors that they feel very safe and enjoy their school life. One pupil said, 'The staff really look after us.' There are no reported incidents of bullying and inappropriate behaviour. Pupils enjoy contributing to the school community. The older pupils are proud to be head boy and girl, prefects and generally like helping around the school. All pupils are able to tidy up and help organise games at break times. Pupils have a generally good understanding and awareness of people from different cultural backgrounds, but the school's organisation of ensuring a regular programme of activities to underpin this is underdeveloped. Music, drama and art are well covered by the school, with regular visits to theatres and pupils performing in the 'Shine' assemblies, occasions where they can celebrate their range of different talents and skills.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. Arrangements for child protection training and safeguarding procedures are well established and all staff have been suitably trained to fulfil their child protection responsibilities. Risk assessments for a range of off-site activities and the school premises are securely in place. Policies and procedures for behaviour management, anti-bullying, health and safety, fire and first aid are regularly reviewed and are conscientiously implemented. Staff's training in first aid is up to date and there are sufficient first aiders on site. Pupils are well supervised at all times. The school ensures that provision for outdoor physical activity compensates well for the small grounds through the regular visits to the local park and leisure facilities. A very small number of older pupils who returned their questionnaires did comment on the small play space for breaks.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

Thorough procedures for the vetting and appointment of staff and others are in place and arrangements meet all requirements. The school has a single central register of staff checks which contains all of the required information.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school's premises offer appropriate accommodation for all pupils to be taught securely and safely. The space available, although compact, is very well maintained, bright and cheerfully decorated. There is a specialist room for information technology and a well-resourced library. Arrangements and facilities for pupils who are ill are appropriate.

Provision of information

All of the required information is provided, or is made available, to parents, carers and others. Newsletters are regular, colourful and informative. The website has a good range of information, policies and news. The previous years' academic performance is appropriately reported, an improvement since the last inspection.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints procedure meets regulatory requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all 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 teachers consistently use assessment information and knowledge of pupils' prior achievements to tailor activities that more closely match pupils' needs and abilities.
- Develop a more systematic approach to increasing pupils' awareness and understanding of the diverse nature of multicultural Britain.

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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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Preparatory		
Date school opened	1950		
Age range of pupils	4 years – 11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 50	Girls: 40	Total: 90
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,221		
Address of school	266 Overndale Road Fishponds Bristol BS16 2RG		
Telephone number	0117 9567977		
Email address	enquiries@gracefieldschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Elizabeth Morgan		
Proprietors	Ivan and Elizabeth Morgan		

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.



21 September 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gracefield School, Bristol, BS16 2RG

When inspectors recently visited your school, we really enjoyed meeting you and talking to you about your work and life at school. Thank you for your friendly welcome and for being so polite and helpful. We judged Gracefield School to be a good school and that it meets all government requirements. This is because it gives you a place where you:

- enjoy your school
- learn many things because of your good teachers
- show excellent behaviour and get on with each other extremely well
- have good attendance
- feel safe and well looked after
- have lessons that are well planned, but could give you work that suits your needs more closely
- have some knowledge about people from different backgrounds in this country, but could learn even more.

We talked to your headteacher and staff about plans to ensure your work is matched to your specific needs and learning about people from other backgrounds. They are already planning to improve these things.

I hope that you all continue to enjoy your learning at Gracefield School in the future.

Yours sincerely

John Seal
Her Majesty's Inspector