

Griffin House School

Independent school standard inspection report

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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

Griffin House Preparatory School is a single-form independent, co-educational day school for pupils aged between three and 11 years. A school has been on the premises since 1939. The school occupies a large, extended Victorian property set in five acres of grounds in the village of Little Kimble, near Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire. The school is non-selective and non-denominational, and there is provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. The school offers childcare provision before and after the school day.

There are currently a total of 108 pupils on roll, none of whom has a statement of special educational needs. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage attend the Nursery and Reception classes, which are part of the main school. There are eight children in Nursery and 20 children in the Reception class. There are eight children who attend part time and four who receive free nursery education. The school has undergone significant changes since its last inspection in 2009. In 2009, the school was bought by Alpha Schools Ltd. The headmaster took up his post in September 2012.

Griffin House aims to 'place traditional values, thoughtful pastoral care and academic rigour at the heart of everything it does'. The school seeks to meet pupils' individual needs to enable them to enjoy their learning and to succeed.

Evaluation of the school

Griffin House Preparatory School meets its aims well, and provides a good quality of education in a happy and nurturing environment where pupils are exceptionally well cared for. There is outstanding provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their welfare, health and safety. Behaviour is outstanding. Arrangements for safeguarding children's welfare are exemplary. Pupils receive a good standard of teaching and a good curriculum; as a result, they make good and sometimes outstanding progress in their academic learning. The school meets all regulations fully and staff consistently implement an extensive range of well-designed policies and procedures that cover every aspect of school life. The school has improved since its last inspection: the curriculum is developing well as a result of concerted review and enhancement; teachers are given very good support to

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

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

enhance their professional development. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff now hold appropriate qualifications to work with young children and children benefit from challenging activities that promote their learning and development well.

Quality of education

Pupils enjoy a good-quality curriculum that is rich and varied in content and enables them to make good progress. Opportunities for pupils to contribute to school life are very good, and they fulfil their roles and responsibilities very well. Subject co-ordinators contribute to detailed schemes of work that provide a strong framework for lessons. The school is aware of the need to broaden the curriculum content even further, and is already beginning to address this issue with the introduction of critical thinking sessions, for example.

In Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, English and mathematics are supplemented with a varied balance of the humanities, music, French, religious studies and physical education. As a consequence, pupils are well prepared for the requirements of entrance examinations and the next stage of their education. Over the past three years, the large majority of pupils have been successful in reaching the destination school of their choice. Pupils are well prepared for the future. The school has recently enhanced its provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. The 'Workshop' programme delivers very good, targeted provision for those pupils in need of extra help. This is planned to incorporate the school's curriculum while meeting the pupils' individual requirements. A wide range of enrichment activities are available. Clubs such as judo, drama, chess and gardening are popular with pupils and almost all clubs have very good take-up rates.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children's learning and development are supported well. Curriculum provision comprises a good mixture of play-based and adult-led learning delivered indoors and outdoors which covers all areas of learning. For example, opportunities for Reception class children to develop their writing skills were presented by writing on whiteboards, but also by painting or 'writing' in wet sand outdoors. However, on occasion, planned activities are not completely matched to children's individual interests and needs. In Nursery class, the curriculum suits the young age of children very well because it provides a wealth of exciting and active learning opportunities which children greatly enjoy.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall and in some instances it is exemplary. Teachers have at least good subject knowledge and mutually positive relationships between teachers and pupils are evident. Teachers have high expectations of pupils which results in a purposeful atmosphere to all lessons. Good use is made of resources, and teaching assistants are well deployed to enhance pupils' learning experiences. In the best lessons, teachers deliver inspirational teaching securely grounded in prior learning which invigorates pupils to consider problems and debate ideas with intellectual excitement, such as in discussions about micro-organisms or time in numeracy. However, on a few occasions, lessons lack sufficient opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in their learning. This affects the overall consistency of their learning so they do not always learn as much as they

might in every lesson. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers and staff deliver effective teaching, although some older children are not fully engaged in all activities because they are, on occasion, too sedentary for their stage of development.

The small class sizes allow teachers to individualise learning well overall so that almost all pupils receive a good level of challenge that helps them achieve their potential, including those who are more able. No pupil or group of pupils is disadvantaged or left behind. The 'Workshop' coordinator collaborates with class teachers and meticulously plans intervention sessions in and out of regular lessons which meet pupils' learning and personal needs very well and enables those involved to make good progress. Pupils report they find their work hard but enjoyable. They are clear about their targets in literacy and mathematics, and they clearly enjoy doing well. The school's marking policy is consistently applied so pupils receive helpful feedback on their work and they know what they must do to improve.

Pupils make good progress throughout the school; some pupils' progress is outstanding. The level of their abilities is often well above those expected for their age. Work in pupils' books and in lessons indicates they are progressing well in all subjects, including English, mathematics and science. The individualised approach means the progress of every pupil is rigorously monitored. The introduction of tracking systems to measure pupils' progress has enabled the school to demonstrate individual pupils' progress over the last two years, although these systems are not yet sufficiently well established to provide a view of how each pupil progresses over time. Children's good progress in their learning and development in the Early Years Foundation Stage is tracked by teachers using observation and 'learning journey' books, as well as Reception class workbooks. These records indicate all children make good progress from their starting points.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The quality and effectiveness of the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Pupils are eager to attend school and, as a result, levels of attendance are very good. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers report their child enjoys school. The school prides itself on having a 'family' approach to school life, and this is highly evident throughout school. Pupils from the youngest to the oldest are considerate to one another and are proud to be a member of Griffin House. They are excellent ambassadors for the school when speaking with visitors and when on outings. Pupils' understanding of cultural and spiritual issues is developed very well in meaningful activities they can easily relate to. For example, pupils learnt about the Jewish faith by a visit from the parent and Rabbi of a classmate. The school engenders an exceptionally strong sense of community and it is highly visible in its local community through its visits to local care homes and fund-raising activities for Age UK and the Royal British Legion, for example. Within the school, pupils readily take on responsibilities in a very wide range of areas, such as monitors and the pupil parliament. Seniority at school is rewarded by special privileges such as responsibility for a dedicated area of the school grounds.

The school is successful in ensuring all pupils are able to excel in at least one aspect of school life. For example, awards for achievement, effort and behaviour are analysed so that individual successes are celebrated in assemblies. Lessons on personal, social, emotional and health education prepare pupils very well for their own development and include social issues, discussions about potential online safety issues, and dental hygiene. Pastoral care is exceptionally good. Pupils have developed a very good understanding of right and wrong through their learning and being part of school life. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage demonstrate exceptional levels of self-assurance and are wholly confident in the routines of the school. This development is underpinned by the outstanding behaviour of all pupils, in lessons, at breaktimes and around the school. All pupils show superb attitudes to their learning, and they meet the very high expectations of staff exceptionally well.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The welfare, health and safety of pupils are outstanding. The school complies fully with government legislation and guidance. Staff training and their opportunities for professional development are frequent and highly appropriate to maintain and improve on high standards. For example, staff have current and detailed knowledge of child protection procedures as a result of recent training. Parents' feedback is overwhelmingly positive regarding every aspect of school life. The safety and well-being of each pupil is given the highest priority by all staff at Griffin House. As a consequence, pupils state they feel safe and instances of bullying are very rare and swiftly dealt with. Exceptional levels of pastoral care ensure vigilant attention to pupil well-being. Excellent use of home-school link books and very good communication with parents and carers ensures pupils are well looked after at school.

The inclusive 'family' of the school is promoted very well by the headteacher, and pupils find him respectfully approachable. Pupils' understanding of health and safety is excellent. They routinely enjoy healthy lifestyles, eating nutritious school meals and playing energetically in the school's extensive and secure grounds. A particular strength is pupils' understanding of risk management. They fully understand and apply school rules while enjoying adventurous outdoor play, climbing trees and exploring the natural environment.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

Rigorous procedures are consistently implemented to ensure all adults at school, including the proprietor and headteacher, are checked to ensure they are suitable and safe to work with children. This information is accurately recorded in the school's single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school premises provide sufficient classroom space, and allow for dedicated teaching rooms for science, music and art. Throughout the school, pupils' work is on display, creating a pleasing and stimulating environment. The dedicated premises for the Early Years Foundation Stage provide a secure and spacious accommodation for young children. The school premises are well maintained and in a good state of

decoration and repair. The large-scale grounds provide ample opportunities for outdoor play and games. The school makes good use of local facilities such as the swimming pool and local theatre.

Provision of information

The school provides a wealth of clear and up-to-date information for parents and others, including detailed reports, daily well-being updates, newsletters and parents' meetings. Documentation is very well organised so required information is presented promptly.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a robust complaints policy which is made available to parents and carers and which meets regulations fully.

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.

- Improve the quality of teaching and assessment so the large majority of lessons are outstanding, by providing more opportunities for all pupils to enjoy active learning that consistently excites their interest.
- Embed the use of existing systems that track pupils' progress throughout the school to give a clear view of how pupils are progressing over time.
- Continue to develop the curriculum to provide an exciting and innovative learning programme for all pupils in school.

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	1939		
Age range of pupils	3–11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 48	Girls: 52	Total: 100
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 3	Girls: 5	Total: 8
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)	£7,395 to £7,695		
Address of school	Little Kimble Aylesbury Buckinghamshire HP17 0XP		
Telephone number	01844 346154		
Email address	secretary@griffinhouseschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Tim Walford		
Proprietor	Ali Khan		

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.



16 November 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Griffin House Preparatory School, Little Kimble, HP17 0XP

Thank you for welcoming us to your school when we visited recently. We greatly enjoyed speaking with you. We judged your school as good overall. We graded some aspects as outstanding. We were impressed with your exemplary behaviour in lessons and around the school. In many lessons, we saw how hard you work, and the level of some of your work was very good indeed. We thought your school community is very harmonious, and you are extremely kind and considerate to one another. The main findings of the inspection are shown below:

- Lessons are of good quality and these help you increase your knowledge and skills, and to do well in your tests. You make good progress at school.
- The curriculum you study is also good. Your teachers make sure that lessons include everything they should, and often include extra subjects and activities to help you learn more.
- Your teachers look after you extremely well to keep you safe.

In order to improve even more, we have asked Mr Walford to do the following:

- ensure that every teacher makes sure lessons are well suited to every child in the class so that you can all learn as much as possible
- make more use of the information about your progress so your teachers can see exactly how well you are doing in your learning
- continue to develop the curriculum to make your learning experiences even better.

All of you can help your school by continuing to behave well and enjoy school in the ways we saw during the inspection.

Yours sincerely

Susan Mann
Her Majesty's Inspector