

Woodhill Preparatory School

Brook Lane, Botley, Hampshire SO30 2ER

Inspection dates

2–4 October 2018

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders have not monitored the quality of the school’s work well enough. Consequently, standards of teaching and of pupils’ outcomes are no longer good but declining.
- School leaders and the proprietor have not ensured that all the independent school standards have been met.
- There is no effective independent oversight of the school’s work. The proprietor and recently established governing body do not have a secure understanding of their roles. As a result, leaders are not held to account for the impact of their work effectively.
- The planned curriculum is not delivered effectively. Pupils have too few opportunities to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills, particularly in history and science.
- Teaching is not consistently good enough. Across most subjects, teachers’ planning does not consider pupils’ different ages and starting points sufficiently.
- Pupils’ outcomes require improvement. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their writing skills in a range of subjects, genres and contexts.

The school has the following strengths

- The early years provision is good. Adults plan experiences which helps children to settle quickly and develop their skills well across all the areas of learning.
- Pupils’ personal development, behaviour and welfare are good. They are happy and polite. They develop strong relationships with each other and with staff.
- Safeguarding is effective. Safer recruitment procedures are in place. Adults have a good awareness of child protection procedures and practices. Pupils are well cared for and safe.
- Teaching and learning in mathematics are strong. Teaching addresses any gaps in pupils’ mathematical understanding so that they make effective progress.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management at all levels by:
 - ensuring that leaders and the proprietor have the knowledge and skills necessary to make sure that the independent school standards are met
 - increasing the rigour of monitoring and evaluation of leaders' work
 - ensuring that the curriculum is covered appropriately so that pupils develop their knowledge, understanding and skills more thoroughly across the whole curriculum
 - ensuring that governors understand their role in challenging and supporting the work of the school and that they carry out this role effectively.
- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes by:
 - ensuring that teachers' work is monitored routinely and thoroughly
 - improving the teaching of writing so that pupils have opportunities to write in a wide range of subjects, contexts and genres
 - ensuring that teachers' planning considers pupils' different ages and starting points more thoroughly.
- The school must meet the independent school standards, as set out in the annex of this report.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders' actions have not led to sufficient improvements in the school since the last inspection. Pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have declined. Leaders have not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Improvements to aspects of leadership which were identified as priorities at the last inspection have not been addressed successfully. There is no effective system for looking independently and objectively at the quality of the school's work. Consequently, leaders do not have an accurate view of standards in the school.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have faced significant difficulties in staffing. This has resulted in the headteacher taking on a full-time teaching role, which has reduced his capacity for leading the school. Where new procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's work have been set up, they have not been used systematically and have had limited positive impact.
- Teachers are enthusiastic about working at Woodhill. They show great dedication and devotion to the school. However, decisions made about deployment of staff and of how classes are structured have not helped to prevent a decline in standards.
- Leaders have not ensured that the quality of teachers' work is monitored effectively enough. Less experienced teachers have not been supported well enough over time. Consequently, standards have fallen and pupils' outcomes throughout the school are not as high as they should be.
- Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum is broad and balanced. While there is a strong emphasis on mathematics and reading, pupils have not had enough opportunities to develop their skills across the whole curriculum. There are too few opportunities to write at length and for different purposes. There are gaps in pupils' understanding of subjects such as history and science. Leaders have not evaluated the quality of the curriculum and so were not fully aware of the gaps in pupils' learning.
- Leaders are successful in their aim of creating happy, confident individuals. Pupils benefit from participating in some extra-curricular activities such as sporting clubs. Although not consistently strong, there are opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of life in modern Britain. For example, pupils learned about the Football World Cup as part of personal, social, health and economic education. The school celebrates different religious and cultural events. Last year's school trip to see HMS Victory was very popular with pupils.
- Experienced, well-trained adults have a strong understanding of how to provide an effective education for children in the early years. Consequently, leadership in the early years is successful.
- Parents are very supportive of the school. They appreciate the family atmosphere and the personal attention that their children receive. Several parents noted that their children are happy to come to school and that they thrive emotionally and socially.

Governance

- Since the last inspection, the headteacher has taken on much of the work of the proprietor. He has focused effectively on improving safeguarding in the school and on improving the provision of information available on the school's website.
- The new governing body has met only once. While eager and well-meaning, governors currently lack a thorough understanding of their role. For example, they were unaware of the independent school standards which the school is required to meet. Their work is not sufficiently developed to have any impact on school standards.
- Procedures to monitor the effectiveness of leaders' work are underdeveloped. There has been a lack of oversight and monitoring of the school's work, which has resulted in an overall decline in standards.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have improved the safety of the premises. They have put in place a series of useful risk assessments which consider, for example, how the outdoor areas can be used safely. Further minor improvements were made to the school site during the inspection.
- Leaders have ensured that staff recruitment procedures are now fit for purpose. Advertisements show a clear commitment to safeguarding. Interview procedures explore candidates' suitability to safeguard children.
- Appropriate safeguarding and child protection policies are published on the school's website. These take into consideration recent changes to government requirements. Adults in school are well trained in child protection procedures. They know the signs to be aware of that may indicate that a pupil needs extra help and they know how to report any concerns that they may have. Leaders meet with outside agencies appropriately to ensure that pupils get the help and support that they need.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe online. For example, they know not to share personal information with anyone they communicate with online. They know to tell a parent or teacher if anything they see online upsets or worries them.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent. While teaching in mathematics is strong, the quality of teaching in subjects such as English, history and science has varied over time. There are gaps in pupils' learning because they have not been taught effectively in these subjects.
- Because of staffing challenges, some pupils are now taught in mixed-aged classes. Over time, teachers' planning has not been adapted carefully enough to take account of the different age and ability ranges in classes. Activities are not challenging enough for some pupils. Teachers do not ensure that pupils make good progress in a broad range of subjects.
- Teachers' planning does not identify carefully enough what teachers want pupils to learn,

particularly in writing and in foundation subjects. Sometimes, resources used to teach pupils are not pitched at the right level to challenge pupils in their learning.

- Teachers do not develop pupils' writing skills well enough. Pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunities to use their writing skills across a range of subjects, contexts and genres. In particular, there is not enough opportunity for pupils to write at length across the curriculum. Some pupils' spelling and writing skills are not improving as quickly as they should.
- The school's assessment system is not being used consistently well to determine what pupils need to do next to increase their knowledge and understanding. Consequently, pupils, including the most able, do not make enough progress across the curriculum.
- Pupils are positive about their learning because of the strong relationships they develop with staff. In lessons, pupils are diligent and are always willing to work. They listen well when prompted, are prepared to practise their skills and to act on guidance. However, in some subjects, teachers' questions do not encourage pupils to think for themselves effectively enough.
- Occasionally, teachers show a better understanding of pupils' strengths and difficulties, particularly in mathematics and in Year 2. For example, they identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding and provide work which helps to minimise these gaps.
- Teaching in mathematics is a strength. Teachers' planning carefully considers what pupils already know, understand and can do. Pupils use mathematical apparatus effectively to help them develop their understanding still further. Pupils develop strong calculation skills. Teachers' questions help pupils to develop their thinking. There are increasing opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills, including in the younger years.
- Pupils enjoy reading. In the early years, adults provide activities which help children to develop their communication and language skills well, and to learn to read successfully. Adults make sure that children develop their understanding of phonics well. Throughout the school, teachers regularly hear pupils read. However, sometimes texts are too easy to stretch pupils' reading skills.
- Teachers use homework to allow pupils time to practise their skills. In mathematics, homework is used particularly well to identify what pupils have and have not understood, and to plan further learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The warm, welcoming atmosphere in the school means that pupils settle in quickly when they join. Several pupils and staff said that the school is 'like a family'.
- Pupils are keen to participate in activities. For example, pupils volunteered enthusiastically to sing solos during the singing assembly. They like joining in with sporting activities during lessons, at play times and after school.
- Pupils feel safe and well cared for. They say that there is no bullying in school, but they are confident that if there were ever any issues, an adult would sort it out. Parents agree

that their children are safe, and that any rare instances of bullying are dealt with effectively.

- Pupils in the before- and after-school clubs are looked after well.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are happy, polite and friendly. They are proud of their school and of each other. Pupils look out for each other both in lessons and around the school. They are eager to hold positions of responsibility, such as sports leader or prefect. As one pupil said, 'everyone is a helper'.
- Children in the early years learn to take turns, to listen and to play happily with each other. As they progress through the school, pupils maintain this good start, continuing to behave very well in their lessons. Adults ensure that pupils develop a strong sense of confidence and self-esteem. Pupils want to learn and to get things right. There is minimal disruption to learning.
- The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly and are punctual. Leaders follow up any concerns about pupils' attendance quickly and effectively.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The English curriculum is not well planned. For example, although pupils read regularly, texts are not sufficiently challenging for the most able. Sometimes, pupils' work shows that they do not acquire strong inference skills, because they lack the appropriate depth of understanding of what they are reading.
- Pupils' writing skills are not developed well enough. Too few pupils can write at length in a range of genres and across the curriculum. Although attention is paid to pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar, there is an inconsistent approach to this across the school and some pupils continue to make errors. Similarly, pupils' handwriting is not developed as well as it should be.
- Pupils do not learn enough in other subjects across the curriculum, which leads to gaps in their knowledge. There is not a clear plan for progression through the different curriculum areas. As a result, over time, standards in subjects such as science and history are not high enough.
- Outcomes for older pupils in mathematics are strong. Pupils make progress because of the better teaching that they receive. Pupils' gaps in their mathematical understanding are noticed and effective support helps them to catch up.
- Pupils acquire good homework habits, which prepare them well for their next steps.
- Pupils who enter the school lacking in confidence or who are anxious about learning are supported well to settle in to school and to catch up with their learning.
- Approximately two thirds of pupils take entrance examinations to independent secondary schools of their choice. Older pupils are supported well so that most successfully pass these examinations.
- By the end of year 6, pupils attain standards which are broadly in line with pupils'

attainment nationally in reading and mathematics. This prepares them suitably for their next steps in education.

Early years provision

Good

- The overall leadership of the early years is effective. Adults are keen, enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the early years. They ensure that all of the independent school standards and welfare requirements linked to the early years are met. Their plans for further improvements to provision are well thought through.
- Experienced adults make sure that curriculum planning in the early years is stronger and more effective than it is in the rest of the school. Activities are well planned to meet children's interests and to support their development across all the areas of learning. For example, during the inspection, learning was linked to pupils' interest in robots. Adults encouraged children to explain their thinking about the choices they made as they built robots out of cardboard and tape.
- Children's behaviour in the early years is good. Children learn to play together happily. They settle quickly to the activities planned for them and sustain their concentration well.
- Most children arrive in the nursery with skills and abilities that are above those typical for their age. Particular care is taken to make sure that children, including the very youngest, settle quickly and make good progress from their starting points. Adults are quick to identify children's different needs. They make sure that those children who need extra help, including from outside agencies, receive it promptly.
- Children in the early years are safe and well cared for. Adults know children well and this helps them to plan carefully for their different welfare needs. Careful attention has been given to making sure that the provision is suitable for two-year-olds. For example, smaller chairs have been provided, and there is a suitable quiet place for the youngest children to sleep.
- Adults track children's development accurately so that they can plan activities which match their different stages of learning. Partnerships with parents are strong. Parents are kept well informed about the learning journey of their child through the comprehensive 'learning journals' and through regular meetings with staff. This supports children's good progress in the early years.
- There are lots of opportunities for writing and to develop their use of language. In Reception, children who need extra help are identified quickly and receive the support they need to improve their skills. As a result, children are well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- Children use activities in the outdoor areas to improve their skills across the different areas of the curriculum. For example, children enjoy developing their coordination when building with blocks and riding in toy vehicles. In the mud kitchen, adults' careful questions encourage children to think about the 'recipes' they produce. However, overall, outdoor areas are not as stimulating and activities not as well planned as they are indoors.

School details

Unique reference number	116540
DfE registration number	850/6014
Inspection number	10054075

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	39
Proprietor	Marjorie Dacombe
Chair	Brian Smith
Headteacher	Mike Dacombe
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,050
Telephone number	01489 781 112
Website	www.woodhill.hants.sch.uk
Email address	office-b@woodhill.hants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–6 October 2016

Information about this school

- Woodhill Preparatory School, of Woodhill Schools Limited, has been run by the same proprietor for 59 years. It operates on a single site in the village of Botley. Since 2016, the headteacher has taken on much of the proprietor's work.
- A new governing body has been established. It has met once, in March 2018.
- The school is registered as an independent co-educational day school for boys and girls, aged three to 11 years.
- The school runs before- and after-school provision for pupils on the school site.
- There are no pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. There are no pupils with education, health and care plans.

- The school does not provide or use any alternative provision.
- There are no disadvantaged pupils at the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector held meetings with the proprietor, governors, headteacher and other senior leaders.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning in all classes. The inspector also carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including safeguarding and risk-assessment information, the school's development plan, the agenda of the meeting about governance, curriculum plans, schemes of work, records of pupils' achievement, and behaviour and attendance information. The inspector reviewed the checks made on staff about their suitability to work with children.
- The inspector considered the views of staff through holding meetings with them and by considering the 11 confidential survey responses submitted.
- The inspector considered the views of parents through informal discussions at the start of the school day, and through the 23 responses and the 14 free-text responses to the Parent View online survey. The inspector spoke to one parent on the telephone.
- Pupils' views were considered through informal discussions and during a meeting with a group of pupils selected by the inspector.

Inspection team

Catherine Old, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Parent View

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

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 and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, 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 reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2018