

Drive Preparatory School

101 The Drive, Hove, East Sussex BN3 6GE

Inspection dates

6–8 February 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school's positive and inclusive atmosphere ensures that pupils feel safe, valued and secure.
- Teachers establish strong relationships with pupils and have high expectations of their learning.
- Pupils make good progress and achieve well in a range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science.
- Skilful teaching in the arts ensures that pupils achieve particularly well in art and photography.
- Leaders have secured sustained improvements in teaching and learning during the past two years. They have addressed fully the key issues identified at the time of the previous inspection.
- Leaders have improved procedures for assessing and checking pupils' progress since the previous inspection.
- The school's successful focus on pupils' personal, social and emotional development ensures that they are equipped with some of the key skills needed to access learning.
- Pupils are polite, well behaved and keen to succeed.
- All parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, feel that their children are safe in school.
- Leaders make sure that all the independent school standards are in place.
- Teachers make good use of improved assessment information about pupils' progress over time. However, they do not always check pupils' understanding well enough during lessons. As a result, some pupils can become confused and lose focus.
- Systems for monitoring the school's work and for identifying priorities for improvement are not robust enough. As a result, leaders are not as clear as they should be about strengths and weaknesses in the school's performance.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all staff check pupils' understanding and address any confusions consistently well during lessons.
- Strengthen leadership, by developing rigorous and systematic procedures for checking and improving the school's work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and proprietor have developed a caring and effective staff team whose members want the very best for every pupil in the school. All members of staff work closely and constructively together, sharing ideas and expertise to ensure that pupils achieve well, both personally and academically.
- The headteacher has strengthened her strategic leadership role since the previous inspection. She has raised teachers' expectations of pupils' learning, established a reliable system for checking pupils' progress over time and secured sustained improvements in the quality of teaching. As a result, pupils' progress has improved across a range of subjects.
- Carefully selected training has contributed well to improvements in teaching since the previous inspection. For example, training on topics such as autism spectrum disorder, dyslexia and pathological demand avoidance (PDA), as well as a range of safeguarding themes, has been used effectively during the past year to update and refresh teachers' understanding of pupils' needs.
- The recently appointed special educational needs leader has made a good start in her new role. She has established positive relationships with staff and pupils and has swiftly identified priorities for improvement in supporting pupils' learning.
- The school's broad and balanced curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to develop interests, to discover skills and to learn about the world around them. They achieve well and learn about topics that will affect them in their future everyday lives, such as British citizenship, the electoral system and democracy. As a result, they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school's attractive and well-organised library provides pupils with a wide range of good-quality fiction and non-fiction reading material. Books on topics such as world religions and geography make a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Up-to-date reference material provides pupils with insights into career options, including apprenticeships, and college and university courses.
- Leaders have strengthened procedures for improving the school's work. For example, they have introduced suitable action plans, so that they can plan and structure developments in teaching effectively. However, procedures for monitoring improvements and for checking the school's performance are not rigorous enough. As a result, senior leaders are not as clear or as confident as they should be about strengths in the school's work or about priorities for improvement.
- Leaders make sure that the independent school standards are met.

Governance

- The proprietor is responsible for the school's governance and is frequently in the school. He teaches regularly in the school and is well known by pupils and parents.
- The proprietor works closely and constructively with the headteacher and with other members of staff to oversee the school. As a result, he has a sound view of the school's

day-to-day work and of all statutory requirements, including the independent school standards. The headteacher and proprietor have taken steps in the past two years to ensure that the leadership team is challenged more effectively. For example, they have commissioned a number of external audits of the school's work, including on health and safety, safeguarding, and teaching and learning. However, senior leaders are not consistently and systematically held to account for the school's performance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders are committed to ensuring that pupils are safe, comfortable and valued. They liaise well with parents, with agencies (such as children's services), and with other schools.
- Leaders make sure that all members of staff are well qualified and knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures. Regular training ensures that staff have a confident and up-to-date understanding of safeguarding issues.
- Leaders ensure that health and safety checks are completed regularly. They make good use of risk assessments to identify and minimise potential dangers to pupils' safety, taking appropriate action to improve safety procedures wherever necessary. Regular fire and evacuation drills ensure that pupils know what to do in the case of an emergency.
- Pupils are well supervised by adults throughout the day, including at lunch- and breaktimes. Outdoor areas are secure and appropriately maintained, so that pupils can enjoy breaktimes and sports sessions safely.
- Leaders have established a sensible programme of school refurbishment to ensure that the fabric of the building continues to provide a safe and attractive environment for pupils to learn.
- The school's safeguarding policy reflects current government requirements and is published on the school's website.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Teachers use a range of engaging activities well to capture pupils' interest and to extend learning, including for the most able pupils. For example, during the inspection, a group of key stage 2 pupils enthusiastically planted seeds during a science lessons while discussing the best growing conditions for plants.
- Teachers' enthusiasm for teaching and their confident subject knowledge make a strong contribution to the quality of pupils' learning and to their enjoyment of school. Expertise in art, science, computing and primary education ensures that pupils learn well across a range of subjects.
- Teachers know pupils well. A range of assessments completed when pupils first join the school provides teachers with reliable information about strengths in pupils' learning and about any gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Teachers make good use of assessment information to check pupils' progress over time.

- Teachers do not always check pupils' understanding and address any misconceptions during lessons. Some teachers are skilful in making sure that pupils are consistently well engaged during lessons, often successfully drawing reluctant learners into activities. However, some teachers do not respond sufficiently well to signs that pupils are finding it difficult to follow the content of lessons. As a result, individual pupils sometimes lose interest and disengage from learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Most pupils are keen learners. They get on well together and enjoy school. Pupils respect adults and are eager to please their teachers.
- Pupils' self-esteem is often low when they first join the school. Teachers quickly establish warm, constructive and caring relationships with pupils, helping them to recognise personal strengths and successes in their learning. As a result, pupils rapidly grow in confidence and develop a sense of self-worth.
- Sensitive and effective support helps pupils to identify their feelings and to express their emotions appropriately. Pupils are confident that teachers will listen to them, and so feel safe and valued.
- Pupils know some of the steps they can take to ensure that they are safe and secure. For example, they understand the importance of behaving sensibly in and around the school in order to avoid accidents.
- A few pupils are less positive about learning than their classmates and find school life difficult. This is often the case when pupils are new to the school and adjusting to a change in routines and expectations.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are clear about the school's expectations of their behaviour. They understand the impact that their behaviour has on their classmates and take increasing responsibility for their actions.
- Most pupils behave well during lessons, when moving between classrooms and during breaktimes. The older pupils provide strong role models for the younger pupils. For example, they behave maturely during lunch breaks and when entering and leaving the school building.
- The school's consistent behaviour management system contributes well to pupils' good behaviour. Teachers respond calmly, consistently and successfully to any incidents of misbehaviour. They sort out any disagreements between pupils swiftly, fairly and without fuss. As a result, incidents rarely escalate.
- Attendance rates have improved since the previous inspection. Pupils' regular attendance contributes well to their good achievement.

- Parents, pupils and staff say that pupils usually behave well. School records and observations during the inspection confirm this positive view. Sometimes, however, a few pupils lose focus during lessons and disturb their classmates' work.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Improvements in teaching have ensured that pupils of all abilities, including the most able, make better progress than at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils make strong progress from their different starting points in a range of subjects, including in English, mathematics and communication skills.
- Pupils often have considerable gaps in their knowledge and understanding when they join the school because of an unsettled time in the education system in the past. However, teaching plugs gaps in pupils' learning quickly and they go on to develop secure literacy and numeracy skills.
- The work in their English books illustrate pupils' strong progress over time. For example, pupils in key stage 2 select and use vocabulary increasingly well in their written work and develop increasingly accurate spelling and punctuation skills.
- The school focuses successfully on plugging gaps in pupils' mathematical understanding when they first join the school. As a result, pupils quickly acquire the fundamental mathematical knowledge and skills to achieve well in mathematics, and they tackle mathematical tasks with increasing confidence.
- Reading skills are taught well. Pupils develop a good understanding of structure, character and plot in the books studied in class, as well as in those books they choose to read for themselves.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy the arts and are understandably proud of their work. They achieve particularly well in art and in photography, including in GCSE examinations. Pupils' GCSE examination portfolios are full of thoughtful and perceptive work, illustrating their creativity and their increasing photographic and artistic skills. During the inspection, Year 11 pupils spoke sensitively and maturely about the development of their ideas in their art and photography portfolios.
- The older pupils study a range of subjects and many gain worthwhile accreditation, including in English and mathematics. In 2018, pupils who studied GCSEs achieved particularly well in art, business studies, French, photography, geography and spoken English.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education or training. They go on to pursue options that include apprenticeships or further training and qualifications in colleges of further and higher education.

School details

Unique reference number	131127
DfE registration number	846/6020
Inspection number	10056674

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	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	39
Number of part-time pupils	2
Proprietor	Nicholas Faulkner
Chair	N/A
Headteacher	Sue Parkinson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,550 to £8,985
Telephone number	01273 738444
Website	www.driveprep.co.uk
Email address	sue@driveprep.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	28–30 June 2017

Information about this school

- The Drive Preparatory School is a small, mixed, non-selective independent school.
- The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is significantly above the national average. The school caters for pupils with specific learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, autism spectrum disorder and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Pupils study a range of subjects, including English, mathematics, science, geography and art. They work towards nationally recognised qualifications, including GCSE examinations.

- The school is registered to admit a maximum of 80 pupils. Currently, 37 pupils are on roll.
- The school opened in December 1996.
- The most recent standard inspection took place in June 2017.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning during eight lessons. All visits were completed jointly with the headteacher. The inspector also analysed a range of pupils' work and records of pupils' achievement.
- The inspector toured the school and its classrooms at different points during the inspection with the headteacher. She spoke with the headteacher, proprietor, the special educational needs leader, staff and pupils during the inspection.
- The inspector considered 12 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 11 responses to the staff questionnaire. She reviewed a wide range of school documentation regarding the quality of education, the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, and the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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