

The Independent Grammar School, Durham

Claypath, Durham, County Durham DH1 1RH

Inspection dates

26–28 March 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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The proprietors, including the headteacher, have ensured that all the independent school standards are met. They have established a caring and ambitious school, where pupils' personal development and learning needs are provided for successfully.
- The leadership of early years is developing. Opportunities for children to learn in the outdoors areas are not as strong as those in the classroom.
- Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge and plan lessons which generally meet pupils' needs. As a result, children from Reception to Year 4 make strong progress across most aspects of the curriculum.
- Pupils develop a very secure understanding of number work in mathematics, grammar and punctuation in English and key knowledge in science, history and geography. However, pupils' mathematical reasoning, scientific practical skills and their independent writing abilities are not as fully developed.
- The school's assessment and recording system provides regular pupil progress information for teachers and leaders. However, these approaches are not fully embedded.
- Appropriate staff training ensures that staff continue to develop their teaching skills and that they fully understand safeguarding and welfare requirements. The training for leadership roles, such as in early years, is at an early point in development.
- The school's ethos and curriculum have a positive effect on pupils' personal development. Pupils develop a clear understanding of different world faiths and British values.
- Overall, pupils behave well in school. They are well mannered and cooperate well with staff and their peers.
- Recently established governance arrangements hold leaders and staff to account effectively. Leaders have completed accurate self-evaluation and created relevant school improvement plans. However, approaches to reviewing the quality of teaching by the headteacher are not fully embedded.
- Parents are very positive about the school. They are confident that their children are carefully nurtured and that they make strong academic progress. Parents believe that leaders, including the proprietors, and staff listen to their views and respond appropriately.

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?

- Further develop the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that pupils are provided with opportunities in mathematics which deepen their learning and enable them to develop their reasoning skills
 - providing pupils with writing opportunities to demonstrate their capabilities fully and avoid setting a ceiling on their written response
 - strengthening pupils’ scientific skills through a wider range of practical experiences
 - embedding the school’s recently introduced assessment and recording approaches so that leaders and staff can establish an overview of pupils’ progress over time.
- Develop the quality of leadership by:
 - improving leaders’ checks on the quality of teaching in order to provide detailed feedback to teachers as well as keeping the governing board informed
 - developing the skills of the early years leader
 - improving learning in the early years outdoor area.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The proprietors, who include the headteacher, have a thorough understanding of the independent school standards. Consequently, they have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The headteacher, well supported by the chair of the governing board, has identified appropriate priorities for developing the school. Leaders' self-evaluation is accurate and the school's development plan identifies relevant actions to further improve. This has assisted the development of the school from its opening in September 2018. The plan clearly identifies leaders' ambitions for further school growth and improvement.
- Suitable training is in place for staff, including for teachers who are at an early point in their careers. Leaders draw on appropriate expertise from an external consultant and the local authority. This support is supplemented with visits to other schools and guidance from the headteacher. Appropriate monitoring is in place to check the impact of this professional development. However, some of the approaches to check the quality of teaching by the headteacher are not fully embedded.
- The curriculum is well planned across a range of national curriculum subjects. This enables children in early years and older pupils in Years 1 to Year 4 to make good progress. Pupils are enthusiastic about the after-school clubs, such as the science and gardening clubs, where they benefit from further opportunities to socialise and learn together. Younger children in the Reception class are taught an early years curriculum to meet their needs. However, some of the opportunities for learning in the outdoors area are not fully developed.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in British society, and the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of pupils is strong. Visits to places of faith, such as Durham Cathedral and a Sikh gurdwara, help pupils to understand major world religions. The school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) enables pupils to develop a secure understanding of British values and the diversity of people in modern Britain.
- Leadership for early years is jointly provided by the Reception teacher and the headteacher. Both have an accurate understanding of the next steps for development of this aspect of the school, including improving opportunities for learning in the outdoors. The early years leader is experienced in this phase of primary school education, but is new to the role and has not had the opportunity to develop her leadership skills fully.

Governance

- The recently created governing board meets regularly to review the school's development and performance. Members of the governing board hold leaders to account effectively to ensure that the school continues to develop.
- Parents are positive about the consultation meetings where they share their views of how the school is developing with the proprietors. Parents believed that this helps them to be a part of the school's development.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong safeguarding culture across the school. The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. They carry out relevant checks for all staff and governors. Staff and governors receive regular and appropriate training, so they know how to keep pupils safe, including training about how to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism. Consequently, staff and governors understand the safeguarding procedures and their own responsibilities. Leaders have established suitable routines for the drop off and collection of pupils by parents. Discussions with parents demonstrate that they understand the purpose of these arrangements and need to follow these procedures.
- The school has a suitable safeguarding policy which is reviewed regularly to ensure that it meets current government requirements. The policy is available to parents on the school's website. Therefore, the school meets the independent school standards paragraphs 32(1), 32(1)(c) and 7–7(b).

The school's application to make a material change to its registration

- All the relevant independent school standards are likely to be met if the DfE decides to implement the material change requested by the proprietor. This requested change involves increasing the age range of pupils from 4–9 years to 4–10 years.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers display secure subject knowledge and plan effectively for mixed-age classes. They match the work they set to pupils' needs effectively. Consequently, children in early years and pupils in key stages 1 and 2 work with determination and interest in subjects across the curriculum. The Reception children work successfully both academically and socially alongside the Year 1 and Year 2 pupils in their class.
- In early years and key stage 1, phonics teaching is structured and systematic. This enables pupils to develop good phonics knowledge. Pupils generally use these skills effectively when tackling unfamiliar words as they are reading.
- Reading is taught regularly, and this has a positive effect on pupils' ability to read and their love of reading. Teachers generally select well-matched texts which are interesting and challenging. This helps pupils to develop their comprehension skills well and to widen their vocabulary.
- The headteacher sets high expectations for the quality of writing. Teachers respond to this guidance and this has a positive effect on the quality of pupils' work. The basics of grammar, punctuation and spelling are reinforced well, and this is reflected in the quality of pupils' writing. Occasionally, the opportunities to write provided by teachers limit pupils' responses and restrict them from fully demonstrating what they can achieve.
- Pupils' mathematical knowledge is supported well because teachers make sure that there is a strong focus on number work. While there are some opportunities for pupils to use this understanding in problem-solving, this aspect is not as well developed. Similarly, the

development of pupils' reasoning is not evident in their work.

- Teachers make sure that science lessons have a strong focus on increasing pupils' knowledge, with some opportunity for research skills. However, the development of pupils' scientific understanding through practical experimentation is more limited.
- French is taught effectively to pupils from Year 2 to Year 4. Pupils are proud of their French vocabulary, which they were keen to share with the inspector.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are positive in lessons. Occasionally, pupils' enthusiasm can get the better of them and they are not fully focused on the ideas presented by staff or their peers.
- Teachers write comprehensive reports to ensure that parents are well informed about children's and pupils' academic progress and attitudes to learning. Appropriate assessments and reporting mechanisms are in place to meet the statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' self-confidence grows in this caring school. This is because staff provide guidance and support in lessons and across the day. Parents were very positive about this aspect of the school's work. Several parents cited examples of how their child had 'blossomed' since arriving at the school.
- The PSHE curriculum, visits beyond school and a growing range of visitors to the school help pupils to develop their citizenship skills. The school's values are well understood by pupils and they demonstrate these well, for example their respect and tolerance for people who come from a range of backgrounds.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms that bullying can take. They believe that there is no bullying in their school. The school's records support this view and there is a clear policy in place should any incidents occur. Parents are very confident about leaders' and staff's approaches to developing pupils' behaviour and to addressing any forms of bullying, should they arise.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- In the main, pupils behave well in lessons. Very occasionally, where pupils become over enthusiastic or where expectations from teachers are not clear enough, they do not listen as attentively as required to the ideas of teachers or their peers.
- During snack times, playtimes and lunchtimes pupils play games sensibly or socialise well with their friends. Staff take opportunities to encourage healthy eating and good manners. Appropriate supervision and guidance ensure that pupils are safe, and they have adults to turn to if they have any concerns.
- Attendance levels are high and compare well to national averages. There are appropriate

systems in place to check the reasons for pupils' absence where this occurs.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Leaders have established termly assessments across a range of subjects, including mathematics and English. The school's recently introduced record system indicates that in the first term of the school opening, pupils made at least good progress. This is supported by the evidence seen in pupils' books. Throughout the academic year, leaders have introduced more formal assessments to evaluate pupils' attainment against national benchmarks. At the time of the inspection it was too early to consider these results as the school has not completed one full academic year.
- The evidence considered in children's and pupils' books across the school show that overall they are making good progress. In subjects such as English and mathematics, pupils' understanding of the fundamentals of grammar, punctuation and spelling, and number work develop particularly well. However, pupils' progress in developing their independent response in writing and their mathematical reasoning is not as strong.
- Well-structured phonics teaching and regular teaching of reading ensure that pupils make good progress with their early reading skills. Older pupils' comprehension skills and vocabulary development is strong.
- In subjects such as science, history and geography there is clear evidence that pupils are developing secure subject knowledge. At times, the opportunities to apply this knowledge in science through practical experimentation are not as evident in their work.
- Pupils develop a wide range of vocabulary in their French lessons. They can recall this from memory, demonstrating their growing knowledge in this subject.

School details

Unique reference number	144804
DfE registration number	840/6015
Inspection number	10056231

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.

The inspection of the school's provision in relation to the material change that the school has applied to make, was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	11
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Education Partnership (UK) Ltd
Chair	James Tooley
Headteacher	Christopher Gray
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,700
Telephone number	07984 619739
Website	www.igsdurham.com
Email address	principal@igsdurham.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Independent Grammar School, Durham is located in church premises in Durham City.
- The proprietors are The Education Partnership (UK) Ltd, comprising two directors. One of

the directors is the headteacher of the school.

- The school has established a school board to carry out the governance arrangements.
- Since opening, the school has appointed two teachers, a part-time teacher and a teaching assistant to deliver teaching, learning and assessment.
- Currently the 11 pupils are organised into two mixed-aged classes.
- The school was registered by the Department for Education DfE on 31 May 2018 and this was the first standard inspection of the school.

Information about this inspection

- The DfE commissioned Ofsted to consider the school's application to make a material change to its registration as part of this inspection. The school's application was to increase the age range of pupils from 4–9 years to 4–10 years.
- The inspector observed learning in a range of lessons and part lessons in both classes.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and at other times throughout the day was observed by the inspector. He reviewed the school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The inspector held meetings with the proprietors, who are also the headteacher and the chair of the governing board. A meeting was also held with the teachers.
- A group of pupils from Year 2 to Year 4 discussed their opinions about the school and their learning with inspector.
- The inspector took account of the 16 responses to Ofsted's online parent survey, Parent View. Meetings with a total of six parents, a telephone conversation and a parent's letter enabled the inspector to consider parents' views about the school further.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents required to meet the independent school standards, including minutes from meetings of the governing board, information about pupils' achievement, the school's evaluation of its own performance and its development plans. Reviews were made of behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding. The inspector scrutinised pupils' work in their books.
- The inspector toured the school to check that the building met the requirements of the relevant independent school standards.

Inspection team

Michael Reeves, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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