

# Inspection of Riddlesworth Hall School

Hall Lane, Riddlesworth, Diss, Norfolk IP22 2TA

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Inspection dates: 31 January to 2 February 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Inadequate**

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The quality of education

**Inadequate**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Inadequate**

Early years provision

**Inadequate**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**No**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils value the trusting relationships they develop with staff. They know adults care for them and provide support when they ask for it. Pupils feel safe at school. They respect one another and will willingly offer any help to their peers. However, leaders have not ensured that arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Most pupils are enthusiastic learners. Pupils listen to teachers and know they expect them to work hard. However, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. Significant changes to staffing means that pupils do not receive a good quality of education. It has not been thought through how pupils build their knowledge over time. This includes the youngest children in early years. As a result, pupils' grasp of important knowledge does not give them a firm foundation for the next stage of their education.

Pupils say that they do not experience bullying at their school. They know what bullying is and the different forms it may take. Pupils are confident that staff will sort out any of their concerns.

Pupils are very active at school. They enjoy a range of clubs especially the sporting fixtures. Regular visits to the woodland for outdoor activities is very popular.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Over recent years, there have been substantial changes in staffing, including several changes in leadership in the school. A reducing school roll has led to some classes having mixed-aged groupings. During this time, there has not been sufficient focus on developing the curriculum for the changing context of the school. Leaders have not considered how their chosen curriculum supports pupils to achieve well.

There is no oversight of the quality of education across the school, including in the early years. Leaders have not ensured that curriculum plans detail what pupils need to know and in what order. Guidance for teachers is unclear. In some subjects, while teachers make use of some purchased schemes, these plans are not used consistently by all staff as leaders intend. Therefore, lessons are not based on what pupils have learned before. Pupils do not build their knowledge to ensure that they know and remember more. Where teachers are more secure with their subject knowledge, pupils' knowledge is securely developed, such as in art. However, this is only provided for pupils taught in these classes.

There is not an effective approach to assessment. Teachers devise their own strategies. These approaches do not focus on how pupils know and remember more. Staff have not received the training they need to understand how to assess well. Consequently, leaders do not have a secure understanding about how well pupils learn across the curriculum.

Staff teach pupils phonics to help them to read. This starts from the time children begin school. Teachers encourage pupils to read regularly. Pupils could discuss the type of books and authors they enjoy reading. Staff identify where pupils have gaps in phonics knowledge. They provide extra activities for these pupils. However, this work is not well considered. Pupils who struggle do not always have books well matched to the sounds they need to practise. This means that these pupils do not catch up quickly with their reading.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported by the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). Additional interventions are provided by the SENCo. This is because staff have not received any training in how to identify, assess and meet the needs of pupils with SEND. The weakness in the curriculum means that pupils with SEND do not receive a good quality of education.

Pupils are polite and well mannered. They willingly collaborate in class and happily share their games when outside. Occasionally, pupils do not focus on their work and are distracted. This is because tasks are too easy or not well matched to pupils' needs.

A few pupils do not attend school regularly. Records of attendance and admissions registers are not well maintained. This contributes towards leaders' lack of clear systems for checking or encouraging better attendance. Systems for checking the reasons for absences are not thorough. As a result, leaders do not have a secure knowledge and oversight of those pupils who require support to improve their attendance.

The programme to support pupils' personal development is well planned. The schools' oversight of pastoral care helps pupils to develop resilience and self-confidence. The star of the week and the friendship tree celebrate pupils' display of important values. Pupils learn about equality and diversity through the personal, social and health programme. As a result, pupils know about other cultures and the key features of positive relationships. Pupils know how to live a healthy lifestyle and keep themselves safe. Leaders ensure that there is a well-thought-out approach for providing careers guidance for older pupils.

The proprietor body has not ensured that the school meets the requirements of all the independent standards. An advisory board, which was used to provide information, is no longer in place. There has been no urgency in seeking alternative arrangements to support and monitor the leaders' work. Policies are not reviewed as stated, they do not accurately reflect the current position of the school, including the school's safeguarding policy. Consequently, there are unmet independent school standards.

The proprietor body has not ensured that the buildings are maintained to an acceptable standard. Standards are not met because there is no evidence regarding how commissioned audits for health and safety and fire assessments have been acted on. Risk assessments for specific activities have not been conducted. The first-aid policy is not implemented effectively. Aspects of the premises have not met

the independent school standards because there is no suitable provision of a medical room or provision of drinking water around the school.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the equality Act 2010.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders ensure that staff receive safeguarding training. Staff know about the signs of abuse and how to report any concerns. However, information about concerns is not well coordinated. This means it is not easy for leaders to check what actions have been taken to ensure that pupils are not at risk. Leaders do not maintain a record of where pupils have gone when they leave the school. Leaders do not have a clear oversight of all the records to recognise if pupils are at risk of harm.

Leaders carry out checks about the suitability of adults working at the school. However, leaders are not ensuring that they have all the information before staff begin their employment. They do not take appropriate measures to ensure that staff are well supervised while awaiting the completion of all checks

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- Safeguarding arrangements are not effective. Leaders have not ensured that their approaches to keeping pupils' safe are systematic and robust. The statutory guidance for safer recruitment is not followed assiduously. Attendance is poorly managed and there is no record of destinations when pupils leave the school. There is not a clear oversight of all the information leaders collate to ensure that pupils are not potentially at risk from harm. Leaders must act quickly to ensure that systems for keeping pupils safe are robust and meet statutory requirements.
- Leaders have not ensured that all the independent standards are met. The proprietor body does not have systematic approaches for checking the impact of leaders' actions. This means that it does not hold leaders to account for how the independent standards are met or how the school improves. The proprietor body should ensure that procedures are in place and used effectively to check all aspects of the school's work and for meeting the independent standards consistently well.
- The curriculum is not well planned. It does not identify or sequence the knowledge that pupils need to know. It is not well matched to the mixed-age class arrangements. This means that pupils do not build their understanding progressively and remember their learning over the long term. Leaders must plan and design a curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils to support their achievement and ensures that staff understand how to deliver the curriculum well.

- Leaders do not have a secure enough knowledge about planning a curriculum that is appropriate for the early years. Children do not secure the knowledge and skills they need as a secure foundation for their next stages of education. Leaders must ensure that the early years curriculum is well planned and provide staff with training they need so that it meets the learning and development needs of children effectively.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	121221
<b>DfE registration number</b>	926/6000
<b>Local authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	10259488
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	35
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Confucius International Education Group
<b>Chair</b>	Eva Zhang
<b>Headteacher</b>	John Forster
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£8,100 to £10,500
<b>Telephone number</b>	01953 681246
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.riddlesworthhall.com">www.riddlesworthhall.com</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:hmsec@riddlesworth-hall.com">hmsec@riddlesworth-hall.com</a>

## Information about this school

- Riddlesworth Hall is a small independent school. It currently has 35 pupils on roll. The school operates a Nursery that has mixed two- and three-year-old children. Pupils are taught in mixed-age group classes apart from Reception who are taught in a single-age group class. There are currently no pupils above Year 6 who are on the school roll.
- The school is operating beyond its registration agreement and has not applied for a material change to the Department for Education (DfE). The school has admitted children below the age that it is registered with the DfE.
- The school no longer provides any provision for school boarders and is no longer registered as a boarding school with the DfE.

- At the time of the inspection, there was no advisory body identified in school policies to oversee the work of school leaders.
- The headteacher has been in post since January 2023. A significant number of staff left the school in the previous academic year.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school was previously inspected in October 2020. This was a monitoring inspection and was carried out by the independent school inspectorate service. The judgement of the inspection was that the school now met all previously unmet standards.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other staff. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the director as a representative of the proprietor body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also heard several pupils read to a familiar adult. The lead inspector explored the curriculum in another subject by speaking to leaders, visiting pupils and looking at some books.
- To check safeguarding, inspectors met with the designated lead and the deputy designated safeguarding lead. They spoke to a range of staff and pupils. Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding records, including fire risk assessments, health and safety risk checks and safer recruitment of staff.
- The lead inspector toured the school premises and reviewed a range of documentation to check how the school complies with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff through 16 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and considered 16 free-text comments. Inspectors took account of 10 responses to the online survey for staff as well as 16

responses to the online survey for pupils. Inspectors also held meetings with pupils and spoke to them at different times around the school.

### **Inspection team**

Steve Mellors, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Kay Leach

Ofsted Inspector



## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **The school failed to 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
  - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work–
  - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
  - 2(2)(f) where the school has pupils below compulsory school age, a programme of activities which is appropriate to their educational needs in relation to personal, social, emotional and physical development and communication and language skills.
- 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;
  - 3(b) fosters in pupils' self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
  - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
  - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
  - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range; and
  - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.

#### **Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
  - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and

- 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring
  - 9(c) record is kept of the sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious misbehaviour
- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005[12].
- 13 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that first aid is administered in a timely and competent manner by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written first aid policy.
- 15 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006[13].
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
  - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
  - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

#### **Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors**

- 18(3) The checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) and (except where sub-paragraph (4) applies) (2)(e) must be completed before a person's appointment.

#### **Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 24(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including–
  - 24(1)(a) accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils; and
  - 24(1)(b) accommodation for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility.
- 24(2) The accommodation provided under sub-paragraphs (1)(a) and (b) may be used for other purposes (apart from teaching) provided it is always readily available to be used for the purposes set out in sub-paragraphs (1)(a) and (b).
- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to

a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.

- 28(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
  - 28(1)(a) suitable drinking water facilities are provided; and
  - 28(1)(c) cold water supplies that are suitable for drinking are clearly marked as such.
- 28(2) The facilities provided under sub-paragraph (1)(a) will be suitable only if–
  - 28(2)(a) they are readily accessible at all times when the premises are in use; and
  - 28(2)(b) they are in a separate area from the toilet facilities.

## **Part 6. Provision of information**

- 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that–
  - 32(1)(a) the information specified in sub-paragraph (2) is provided to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector[14], the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate[15];
  - 32(1)(c) particulars of the arrangements for meeting the standard contained in paragraph 7 are published on the school’s internet website or, where no such website exists, are provided to parents on request; and
  - 32(1)(g) any information reasonably requested in connection with an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act which is required for the purposes of the inspection is provided to the body conducting the inspection and that body is given access to the school’s admission and attendance registers.
- 32(2) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is–
  - 32(2)(b) either–
  - 32(2)(b)(ii) where the proprietor is a body of persons, the address and telephone number of its registered or principal office.
- 32(3) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is–
  - 32(3)(d) particulars of arrangements for meeting the standards contained in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 13; and
  - 32(3)(f) details of the complaints procedure referred to in paragraph 33, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

## **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; and
- 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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