

Inspection of The Independent Grammar School: Durham

Claypath, Durham DH1 1RH

Inspection dates:

28 to 30 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a small and welcoming school. Pupils enjoy learning in a calm environment. The school is inclusive and nurturing. Pupils appreciate that they can make good friends here. They feel safe. They develop positive and good-natured relationships with staff and each other. If worried, pupils know there are adults they can talk to in school.

Pupils behave well. They are polite and respectful. Bullying is not tolerated. There are few incidents of poor behaviour. Most pupils think that staff sort out any incidents of poor behaviour fairly. Pupils enjoy earning house points in reward for their good behaviour and achievements.

The school has an ambitious curriculum in place. Staff have high expectations for what pupils can achieve. Pupils learn in small classes. They have extra adult support when needed. Staff make sure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), can access the curriculum.

Pupils enjoy a range of enrichment activities and clubs. The school's 'CREATE' values are threaded through the curriculum. These include learning respect for others and enjoyment through learning. Pupils learn how these values will equip them for life in the wider world. They are proud of their fundraising activities. They enjoy residential experiences. Older pupils like attending York University to take part in practical science lessons.

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

Since the school opened, the number of pupils has increased significantly. This year, the school has extended the age range of pupils. The school has developed a broad and aspirational curriculum which accommodates these changes. The foundations for future learning begin in the early years. Pupils study a range of subjects to gain GCSE qualifications.

Staff use assessment well to identify individual pupils' next steps in learning. In lessons, staff often check what pupils know and can remember. They provide prompt feedback to pupils. They help pupils to address any misconceptions. Pupils who need help, including those with SEND, receive appropriate support. This includes extra personalised or small group learning. Yet, the school does not maintain effective oversight of the implementation of the curriculum. Leaders do not check well enough if pupils are learning the curriculum effectively. They cannot be sure that pupils can remember important curriculum knowledge over time.

The school places high priority on teaching pupils to read. Pupils read often for pleasure and as part of their wider learning. They enjoy reading class texts. They talk with genuine enthusiasm about books and authors they enjoy. They appreciate the range of books they can choose to read in school. They like choosing books from the school's library. Children develop their communication and language skills from

the early years. There is a strong focus on the development of phonics for reading. Books match the sounds that pupils know. Pupils with SEND and those who struggle to read, receive appropriate support. Extra phonics sessions and reading practice help these pupils to catch up. Most pupils become fluent and confident readers by the end of key stage 1.

Since the last standard inspection, the proprietor has improved teaching and learning in the early years. Children receive a well-designed curriculum. Adults provide good-quality care and support. Children develop their learning in an environment that is rich with relevant and exciting activities. Children are well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils' personal development is promoted well through the curriculum. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum contains appropriate topics of learning. Pupils learn age-appropriate relationships and sex education. They learn about the importance of positive relationships, good mental health and how to live healthy lives. Pupils develop their understanding of risks, including online safety and drug and alcohol addiction. Assemblies support relevant aspects of the curriculum that promote personal development. These include equality and diversity. Staff encourage pupils to reflect on spiritual, cultural and moral issues in the wider world. Pupils experience activities both within the local community and more widely. These include visits to museums, places of worship, outdoor education and fundraising for local charities and the school. Pupils excel through their access to high-quality sports clubs.

The school provides pupils with careers information, advice and guidance. Children in the early years learn about career aspirations. Throughout the school, visiting speakers provide pupils with information about possible further education and career choices. There are opportunities for pupils to visit colleges and universities. There are suitable plans in place to ensure that pupils receive independent advice to help them to make informed decisions.

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets the independent school standards. The health, safety and welfare of pupils are high priority. As the school has grown, the proprietor has appointed experienced and qualified staff. The school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Members of the proprietor body meet often to track the school's improvement work. However, their checks on the implementation of the curriculum are not detailed enough.

Staff are positive about working at the school. They feel valued and enjoy working with their colleagues. They say leaders are considerate of their workload and welfare. Parents and carers are very complimentary about the school. They appreciate the regular meetings with staff and the range of support the school provides for pupils. Typically, most say that they 'can't recommend the school highly enough'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school's methods to check the implementation of the curriculum are not as effective as they should be. Leaders are not sure what pupils can remember of the curriculum over time or whether the curriculum content is having a long-term impact on pupils' learning. The school should ensure that leaders develop effective strategies to check the effectiveness of the curriculum and to make sure that pupils know more and can remember more over time.

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

Unique reference number	144804
DfE registration number	840/6015
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10286452
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	84
Number of part-time pupils	3
Proprietor	The Education Partnership (UK) Ltd
Chair	Professor James Tooley
Headteacher	Chris Gray
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,900
Telephone number	07984 619 739
Website	www.igsdurham.com
Email address	principal@igsdurham.com
Dates of previous inspection	26 to 28 March 2019

Information about this school

- Two material change inspections have taken place since the last standard inspection of the school. These took place in May 2022 and June 2023. The school was judged likely to meet the relevant independent school standards at both inspections. The DfE agreed to a further material change to increase the number of pupils on roll, in September 2023.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The proprietor has recently purchased a new premises for the school. This premises is located at Esh Winning Methodist Church, Acton Road, Durham DH7 9QF. The proprietor proposes to apply to the DfE for a material change for the school to relocate to this site when refurbishment of the building is completed.
- At the time of the inspection, some pupils in key stages 3 and 4 were taught for some of the week in premises located near to the main school site. This is a temporary measure until the school can relocate to the new premises. The address of this temporary site is Laburnum Avenue, Durham DH1 4HA.
- The school has a Christian ethos.
- Since the last standard inspection, several new staff have been appointed.

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 meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, chair of the proprietor body, the leader for early years, the leader for the provision for pupils with SEND, some teachers with oversight of the curriculum in different subject areas, staff and some pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into English, including early reading, mathematics, history and PSHE. Inspectors looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke to teaching staff and spoke to some pupils about their learning. Inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' work.
- An inspector scrutinised leaders' planning for the curriculum in French and geography and looked at samples of pupils' work for these subjects.

- Inspectors spoke with leaders and staff about the school's approach to safeguarding pupils in school. Inspectors checked the single central record and reviewed records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. Checks were made on staff training and safeguarding procedures. Inspectors checked the implementation of risk assessment and health and safety policies, including the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- The lead inspector toured the school sites with the headteacher. The lead inspector viewed the new proposed school site and building plans with the headteacher and a director. This proposed new site is not yet fit for purpose.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for parents, pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Stephanie Innes-Taylor, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Thomas Wraith	His Majesty's Inspector

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