

Inspection of Drive Preparatory School

101 The Drive, Hove, East Sussex BN3 6GE

Inspection dates: 14 to 16 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils appreciate the smaller, home-like feel of this school. They have very positive relationships with school staff. Staff know pupils very well and use this understanding to adapt the learning environment in response to pupils' individual needs. Pupils and their families feel that the school is a safe environment. However, leaders at all levels and staff do not have the knowledge or understanding needed to keep pupils safe.

Teachers plan lessons in ways that engage and enthuse pupils. Those in art lessons commented, 'We could stay and do this all day,' while painting. Pupils progress through the curriculum well in a number of subjects, because teachers know their subjects well and design learning confidently. Other subjects, including early reading and English, are less well developed within the school. As a result, pupils are not achieving as well in these areas as they should.

Pupils enjoy the wide range of trips. These trips support learning and broaden pupils' horizons. For example, to support pupils' developing French language, they visited Toulouse, and were able to use their French to shop and to order in a restaurant. Pupils are generally polite and respectful. They are attentive in lessons, and keen to succeed. Some pupils need more support with their behaviour than others, and staff managed this sensitively and calmly.

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

The school aims to create an environment that enables pupils who may feel overwhelmed in a larger school to learn successfully and develop their confidence. A significant proportion of pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Pupils can join from Year 3, and the school aims to enable all pupils to acquire GCSE qualifications by Year 11.

Curriculum leadership lacks clarity. The school relies too heavily on the expertise of individual teachers to ensure that pupils receive a good quality of education. The school has not considered carefully enough what pupils need to learn at each stage to be ready to begin their GCSE programme in Year 10.

The school has not set out clearly what pupils need to learn at each stage or in each year group. In some subjects, particularly where a single teacher delivers the curriculum for each year group, teachers' subject knowledge and understanding of how to order learning is very strong. In these subjects, pupils achieve very well.

In subjects such as mathematics and English, there is a lack of joined-up thinking about the curriculum. Teachers frequently have strong subject knowledge and ensure that pupils remember and deepen their learning, but those teachers often operate in isolation. Teachers frequently have to fully reassess pupils' understanding at the start of each key stage, as reliable information about what pupils know and

remember is not being systematically gathered and passed on. This is time consuming and detracts from time that could be spent teaching.

Pupils often join the school after struggling in their previous schools or having not attended school for a significant period of time. Some pupils join as fluent readers, others do not. Pupils who join the school's primary phase are often at a very early point in learning to read. Though pupils' starting points in reading are assessed upon entry, the school's approach to teaching reading is not clear or coherent. Staff in the primary phase have used their existing knowledge of phonics to incorporate phonics teaching into the school day. They ensure that pupils get daily opportunities to read with an adult. Staff track pupils' progress carefully. The school, however, has not provided any training for staff in the teaching of early reading. The school does not ensure that books that match the sounds pupils are learning are available so that pupils can apply their newly acquired phonics knowledge directly when reading.

The school has developed an appropriate curriculum for personal, social and health education and for relationships and sex education. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online. Leaders place a strong emphasis on extra-curricular activities. They provide a very broad range of clubs, performance opportunities and musical instrument tuition to enable pupils to develop their talents and interests.

Many pupils have a history of low attendance. The school works carefully with families to integrate pupils into the school and to ensure that pupils feel comfortable and supported. For many pupils, this work has had a positive impact on their school attendance. However, some pupils' attendance remains low. Leaders do not analyse the impact of their work to improve attendance well enough, and therefore do not always identify when a planned strategy is not bringing about the intended improvement.

Senior leaders, and the proprietor, are heavily involved in the day-to-day running of the school. However, they do not have strong enough oversight of how the school is performing or of the independent school standards. The school is unable to evidence their compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

The school has no clear priorities at present. Staff training and development opportunities are very limited. Neither the headteacher, nor the proprietor demonstrate the knowledge and understanding necessary to carry out their roles effectively. The proprietor has not ensured effective governance arrangements are in place. The school does comply with Schedule 10 of the Equalities Act.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The proprietor does not perform their strategic leadership responsibility in relation to the school's safeguarding arrangements effectively. The proprietor has taken no steps to develop their knowledge of effective safeguarding so that they can perform

their role. The proprietor is, for example, unaware of the content of safeguarding legislation, including Keeping Children Safe in Education. They do not ensure that there are clear systems and procedures in place to ensure that the school complies with relevant safeguarding legislation. The proprietor does not ensure that professional boundaries between staff and pupils are consistently maintained.

Leaders do not maintain their own knowledge and understanding of safeguarding or maintain up-to-date training to enable them to fulfil their roles effectively. The school's procedures to ensure that children at risk of being harmed, or who are being harmed, are identified are not effective.

While staff are required to complete online safeguarding training, no action is taken by the school to check that staff have understood. There is no clear and consistent procedure for staff to raise a concern. Staff report that when they have raised concerns, they are unaware of what action has been taken.

The school ensures that an appropriate single central record is maintained. However, the school does not ensure that wider safer recruitment practices are consistently followed. This is reflected in staff personnel files. No staff have undertaken safer recruitment training.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school's procedures concerning identifying pupils in need of help; staff training in safeguarding; and leadership oversight of safeguarding are weak. The school does not identify effectively pupils who need help or complete appropriate actions to safeguard these pupils. This puts pupils at risk of harm. The proprietor must ensure that the school delivers appropriate and effective safeguarding training for leaders and staff. Additionally, the proprietor must ensure that they have the knowledge and understanding to provide strong strategic leadership in relation to safeguarding.
- Neither school leaders, nor the proprietor, keep clear oversight of how well the school is performing in key areas. The school is not consistently meeting the independent school standards. Leaders, and the proprietor, need to ensure that there are clear systems in place that provide the proprietor with the information needed to ensure the effectiveness and quality of leaders' work and that the independent school standards are consistently met.
- There is a lack of clarity in curriculum leadership. This has led to a lack of curriculum coherence in some subjects from key stage 2 to key stage 4. Not all teachers know what pupils should learn at each stage in order to be ready for their next steps. Leaders need to ensure that there is a clear and well sequenced curriculum in place in all subjects that begins when pupils join the school.
- Some pupils join the school at an early stage of learning to read. The school does not ensure that a clear and coherent approach to the teaching of early reading is

in place. This hampers pupils' progress towards becoming fluent readers. Leaders need to ensure that there is a clear and coherent approach in place to ensure all pupils learn to read well. The school must ensure that all staff who teach pupils who are at an early stage of learning to read are trained so that they are expert in the teaching of early reading.

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	131127
DfE registration number	846/6020
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10267614
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	46
Proprietor	Nicholas Faulkner
Headteacher	Sue Parkinson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,885 - £8,997
Telephone number	01273 738444
Website	www.driveprep.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@driveprep.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 to 8 February 2019

Information about this school

- The Drive Preparatory school is not a designated special school. However, a significant proportion of pupils on roll have an EHC plan. Many pupils on roll have experienced difficulties in managing the environment of a larger school.
- The school is not using any alternative provision.

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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and the proprietor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, art and languages. For each deep dive, inspectors met with 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. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the quality of education provided in other subjects, and reviewed schemes of work for some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors carried out other activities to check that the school meets the independent school standards. These included a check of the school premises and wider work to comply with health and safety laws (including fire safety). Inspectors considered the school's approach to risk management. Inspectors also checked the relevant policies and the school website.

Inspection team

Alice Roberts, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Caroline Clarke

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.

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.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005[12].

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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