



The Grantham Preparatory School

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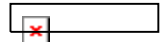
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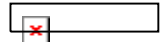
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Introduction and summary

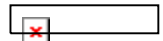


Purpose and scope of the inspection



This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

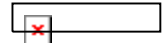


Grantham Preparatory School is situated in purpose-built accommodation on an open site on the outskirts of Grantham. It is a non-denominational independent day school that caters for boys and girls, with a broad range of aptitudes and abilities, between the ages of 2 and 11. At the time of the inspection, there were 131 pupils on roll, 66 boys and 65 girls. Currently 13 pupils attend part-time. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs (SEN). Whilst the school does not adopt the code of practice for SEN a small number of pupils receive additional support with their learning.

The school's mission statement emphasises its dedication to the pursuit of academic, musical and sporting excellence. According to the aims of the school all pupils are expected to work hard within a happy family environment. Rules and guidelines are designed to promote harmony and consideration for others and to give pupils a feeling of security so that they can achieve their full potential. Pupils are prepared for public school entrance examinations as well as selective examinations for the grammar schools in the area.

The school is owned by A for E Limited, a UK company owned by International Educational Systems (IES) Limited who acquired A for E Limited in May 2004. Currently, two directors for A for E Limited oversee general development. The educational leadership and day-to-day management of the school are undertaken by the headteacher, assisted by the deputy headteacher and the head of Infants.

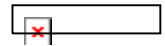
Summary of main findings



Grantham Preparatory is a very successful school that has many strengths. Much progress has been made in the last two years. The school is efficiently managed and well led by an enthusiastic and thoughtful headteacher. The new owners have already made a positive impact. Close co-operation has been established between the directors and the headteacher and plans are in hand for future developments.

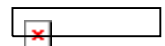
The school is a happy, orderly community where pupils feel safe, work hard and achieve well. Relationships at all levels are very good. Pupils are polite and courteous and their behaviour is exemplary. The staff is highly committed and work hard. The high quality of a significant proportion of the teaching across a broad curriculum is a major strength of the school. This ensures that pupils make very good progress.

What the school does well



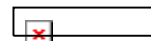
- it provides a broad, balanced and rich curriculum that is significantly extended by a large number of clubs and out of school activities;
- the large proportion of high quality teaching ensures that pupils of all abilities make very good progress;
- the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good.
- the school has a very positive ethos where each child is valued. Relationships are very good and behaviour is exemplary;
- teachers create bright, lively and stimulating classrooms to help pupils learn. High quality displays value and celebrate pupils' achievements and stimulate further study; and
- the teaching ensures that the pupils are eager to learn, confident and articulate and very well prepared for their next stage of education.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations



- improve aspects of the premises recorded in Section 5 and provide appropriate facilities and resources to support pupils when they are ill; and
- provide further information for parents as detailed in Section 6.

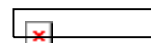
What the school must do to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002



In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA, the school should:

- devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.

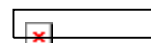
Next steps



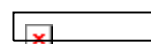
Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- a review of the whole of the provision for pupils aged under 3 and in particular ensure that all experiences provided are of real depth and quality.
- refine assessment procedures and set more precise targets for pupils with special education needs; and
- improve the procedures for school development planning.

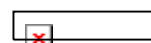
Compliance with the regulations for registration



1. The quality of education provided by the school



The quality of the curriculum



The curriculum is broad, balanced, of very good quality and meets the requirements for registration. Overall the curriculum for the early years is rich and predominantly focuses on the Foundation Stage early learning goals. In the recent inspection of the nursery in February 2004, the curriculum was broad and pupils made very good progress in all areas of learning. For pupils aged under 3 a broad range of activities and experiences are provided, clearly based on national guidelines in 'Birth to Three Matters'. Most activities are of an appropriate nature and content but they are not always developed in sufficient depth.

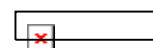
In the infant and junior departments the curriculum broadly follows the National Curriculum. The national programmes of study are often used as a basis for teachers' planning. Aspects of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy are used well to support work in English and mathematics. The curriculum in the infant department is mainly taught by class teachers but effective specialist teaching is systematically introduced as pupils move through to the junior department. This specialist teaching has a very positive impact on pupils' learning and their rate of progress. Specialist teaching is provided in music, physical education, art, French, science, information communication technology (ICT), and in Year 6, Latin.

Sufficient time is allocated to cover a wide range of subjects. Although English, mathematics and science receive the largest proportion, other National Curriculum subjects, and religious education, are not neglected. A carefully devised programme of personal social and health education (PSHE) is provided across both departments in the school. A clearly written curriculum policy is well supported by appropriate, detailed plans and schemes of work. Teachers use them well to carefully plan lessons in considerable detail and at different levels. These plans ensure the progressive development of an appropriate range of knowledge and skills as pupils move through the school. The curriculum for most pupils is delivered through well-devised activities which are carefully and clearly matched to the pupils' ages and stages of development.

No pupil currently has a statement of special educational need. The school does not have a formal register of pupils with SEN, nor does it adopt the code of practice. However, pupils who require additional help are quickly identified by their class teachers.

The formal school curriculum is extended and enriched considerably through a good programme of extra-curricular activities, clubs and visits. These include a range of sporting activities, cookery, computer, dance, drama and gardening. Regular homework is systematically planned to reinforce and extend current class work.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



The quality of teaching was very good or better in over two thirds of the lessons observed. This high quality teaching has a positive influence on the successful life and work of the school. In the foundation stage the teaching is consistently very good. Teachers are very skilful at guiding pupils in the acquisition of new knowledge and enable them to make very good progress in a wide variety of well-planned activities. The infant teachers' effective planning gives a good structure to lessons. Tasks are provided that engage pupils' interest and result in them making very good progress. In the junior department, pupils are taught, in a number of subjects, by specialists who have a very good knowledge of their subject and a high level of expertise. These lessons are characterised by inspired teaching, which reflects the teachers' passion for their subjects. Pupils know the objectives of lessons and understand what is expected of them. All lessons and activities are positive and productive.

A broad range of experiences and activities are provided for children in the under 3's class. Whilst most are of an appropriate content and nature, some lack quality and depth in the way they are developed. Staff supervise the children closely and ensure they play with a variety of materials in a safe and secure environment. However the children are not sufficiently challenged by effective and precise questioning. Children play with equipment and apparatus confidently but they are not encouraged enough to explore, experiment and investigate.

The teachers use a variety of appropriate teaching and learning strategies very effectively. They capture the pupils' interest and help to sustain their concentration well. Teachers' questioning techniques are good; they provoke thought and stimulate enquiry. Teachers are astute at assessing the pupils' understanding. They use this knowledge to influence the way the lesson progresses and how subsequent work is planned. Lessons have a clear sense of purpose and proceed at a good tempo. A very good balance is maintained between direct teaching, practical and written activities and opportunities for pupils to talk about their work. When pupils are working collectively and independently, teachers intervene effectively to help pupils understand the work they are doing. Positive feedback to pupils is a regular feature of lessons and is often excellent. Very good relationships exist within all classes. Pupils enjoy learning, are keen to offer ideas and suggestions, and work diligently. Classroom assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning because they are well briefed on the activities and work well in partnership with the class teacher.

Teachers manage pupils well. Classroom routines are firmly established, clearly understood, and

followed by pupils. The pupils' excellent behaviour contributes well to their rate of progress. Classrooms are organised very well and very good use is made of resources and all available space for teaching and learning, and the deployment of resources. The teaching effectively promotes literacy and numeracy within subjects other than English and mathematics.

Arrangements for the assessment of pupils' work are very good. The policy for record keeping and assessment is a practical document of high quality. It is adhered to carefully and thoroughly. The marking policy used across the school assists pupils to make good progress. All teachers mark pupils' work regularly and often provide constructive and encouraging comments. Teachers have good strategies for assessing progress through their careful questioning. They use the knowledge gained to set clear targets for pupils' future learning. Informal assessment in the foundation classes is very precise and effective. Observations of pupils' progress are noted against the early learning goals. The school uses standardised, national and school-based tests systematically to measure pupils' levels of attainment.

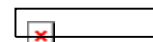
The identification of pupils with SEN is carefully undertaken by the class teachers. Individual education plans (IEPS) are drawn up. Clear decisions are made about the nature of the support required and whether it is to be provided in the classroom, or separately, by a specialist teacher for SEN. The targets could now be more sharply focused, more frequently reviewed and more fully shared with parents.

The vast majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt they were well informed about their children's progress.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils



The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a significant strength of the school. The requirements for registration are met.

The school contributes successfully to pupils' spiritual development through its positive aims and values. The topics for assemblies support their spiritual growth and understanding through opportunities to listen, reflect, sing and pray. Pupils willingly participate and their contributions are valued. The religious education curriculum enables pupils to develop an understanding of different world faiths, as well as providing occasions to affirm their own values.

The school is successful in developing pupils' self-esteem, self-confidence and self-knowledge. This is achieved through a well-constructed PSHE programme, the study of citizenship and a complementary religious education programme. Pupils gain an understanding of how society functions as they work and play together. Pupils' social development is encouraged through the good range of extra-curricular activities that extend the curriculum and the experience of pupils. Understanding of the social context in which they live is enhanced through educational visits beyond the school. The caring attitude shown by staff to pupils encourages them to show sensitivity to others. As a result, the school is a happy community where pupils grow into responsible and confident young people.

The school sets high standards for pupils' moral development and the quality of the provision is excellent. The school is successful in helping pupils to understand the difference between right and wrong and in giving them an introduction to public services and institutions in England. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and has a positive impact on their achievement. Sanctions and rewards are

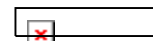
made explicit and the system of school rules has a significant effect on behaviour, relationships and personal development. Moral issues are sensitively addressed as they arise through class discussion and the curriculum. The pupils recognise the importance of rules. Year 6 pupils have special responsibilities in the school. These include being members of the School Council, house captains, librarians or prefects and they take their roles very seriously. All pupils are respectful of property and treat the building and each other with respect and care.

Provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. Pupils' awareness of their own and other cultures, traditions and beliefs is developed through the work in art, French, history, geography, music and religious education. Important religious festivals are acknowledged and the appropriate music, artefacts and literature are included. Artistic displays around the school effectively reinforce and extend this aspect of school life.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



The school gives a high priority to the health, safety and welfare of its pupils and meets the requirements for registration. It is a well-ordered community with firmly established routines. The school has produced a comprehensive range of high quality policies to support its actions. The head teacher plays a key role in ensuring there is good provision for the personal support and guidance of pupils. Discussions with pupils show they feel secure and can turn to a number of adults if they need comfort and help.

An appropriate child protection policy is in place. The head teacher is the designated member of staff responsible for co-ordinating action and liaising with agencies. The staff has received training with regard to their duties and responsibilities for this role. School visits are carefully planned and clear criteria are in place to identify the risks associated with different activities and the actions taken to reduce these. Well-planned and thoroughly documented arrangements for the administration of First Aid by qualified staff are in place. An accident book is completed satisfactorily after any pupil has received First Aid. Fire regulations are carefully observed, and fire practices take place regularly. There have been no alterations to the building since the last fire officer's report in 1999 when it was satisfactory. All fire-fighting appliances have been checked recently.

The school's behaviour policy reflects a determination to promote and achieve high standards of behaviour amongst pupils. The need for minor sanctions is rare. Movement around the school is safe and orderly. Pupils are well supervised at all times, including play and lunchtimes. Appropriate arrangements are in place when there is inclement weather. Attendance is good and class and admission registers are maintained appropriately.

The school has not completed a thorough audit of accessibility. It does not fully comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

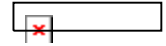
Yes.

What does the school need to do to comply with the DDA?

In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA the school should:

- Write a three-year strategic development plan to ensure that the school fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff



The school meets the requirements relating to the suitability of the proprietor and staff. In May 2004, the shares of A for E Limited were acquired by International Educational Systems Limited who now own the school. The board of directors takes a keen interest in the development of the school. One designated director liaises very closely with the school through regular visits, e-mail and telephone contact. A positive and supporting working relationship has quickly been established with the headteacher and staff.

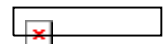
Good procedures are in place for the recruitment of suitably qualified teaching and non-teaching staff. Appropriate references are taken up and enquiries are made about the applicants' medical fitness. Previous employment history is closely scrutinised. The school ensures that its employees are suitable to work with children and has undertaken appropriate checks through the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) on all current staff.

The staff are well qualified and deployed to good effect. Good use is made of the teacher's subject knowledge and some teachers are appointed on a part-time basis to provide specialist teaching. Good systems are in place to ensure effective communications between teachers.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



This purpose-built school provides good accommodation for its pupils and meets most of the registration requirements relating to premises and accommodation.

Set in extensive grounds of almost four acres the building provides sufficient space for current numbers on roll. As the school grew, four additional and good-sized pre-fabricated classrooms were added to the original modern brick building. All classrooms are bright and spacious and enable an appropriately broad range of activities to be provided. The accommodation contributes significantly to the quality of teaching and learning.

The school is immaculately clean, well-maintained and decorated. Since the new owners took over in May 2004, improvements have taken place. A new carpet has been provided for the junior classrooms, outside areas have been smartened up and changing rooms have been constructed. A minibus was purchased and water fountains installed. Attractive and stimulating displays of artefacts, pictures and pupils' work in classrooms and around the school celebrate the pupils' achievement and also stimulate further study.

Specialist accommodation for science, art, ICT and music is used well. Whilst the mini hall is relatively small, when necessary, it can be enlarged by moving a screen. Provision of toilets and wash basins is good but the thermostat in the main building fails to control sufficiently the temperature of the water coming out of the hot taps. In addition there is no clearly designated or

appropriately resourced area to cater for pupils when they are ill.

Outside facilities are good. The hard play area is of sufficient size to provide opportunities for a wide range of activities at break time. In addition, a large field supports the provision of a good range of games and sporting activities. However the fencing round the play area for the children under three is not in sufficiently good condition.

The overall provision of accommodation is good but three aspects need attention.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

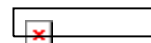
The school complies with most but not all of the requirements.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- make appropriate provision to cater for the needs of pupils when they are ill (paragraph 5(l));
- ensure that the fence surrounding the play area for pupils under three is of good condition (paragraph 5(t)); and
- provide a supply of hot water to washbasins that does not exceed 43 degrees (paragraph 5(k)).

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The prospectus and open days provide existing and prospective parents with detailed and clear information about the aims and work of the school. The informative web site is also regularly updated.

Communications between the school and home are generally good and regular. Parents also have the opportunity as they leave and collect their children to make contact with staff. They do so on a regular basis. The analysis of the parents' questionnaires indicates that the large majority of parents are happy with the information they receive from the school. This analysis also shows that they feel welcomed in the school and have a high regard for its work. Many support the school in a variety of ways and some help with activities.

Regular newsletters keep parents well informed and notice boards in general areas of the school and classrooms also contain additional informative data. Detailed and clearly written reports are issued at the end of each term and clearly show how the pupils are making progress. Parents are regularly invited to come to the school to discuss their children's work. Despite this good communication, however, the school does not ensure that parents are made fully aware of policies relating to bullying, child protection, health and safety, sanctions and good behaviour.

Additionally, many parents are unaware of the details in the policy relating to the complaints procedures adopted by the school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

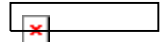
The school meets most but not all of the requirements.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- o policies relating to bullying, child protection, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, and sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving (paragraph 6(2)(h)); and
- o details of the complaints procedure adopted by the school (paragraph 6(2)(j)).

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints



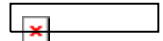
The school meets requirements for handling complaints. A clear policy and well-defined procedures are in place. The policy has been updated and amended recently to make it more precise and detailed.

The policy allows initially for a complaint to be dealt with on an informal basis. However, appropriate formal stages and procedures are clearly outlined to ensure any complaints are considered fairly and objectively. Appropriate timescales are set so that there is a stepped and systematic approach to the handling of a complaint.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



Name of school:	The Grantham Preparatory School		
DfES ref number:	925/6031		
Type of school:	Preparatory		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	2-11		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 66,	Girls 65,	Total 131
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys 6,	Girls 7,	Total 13
Annual fees (day pupils):	£5,040 per annum		
Address of school:	Gorse Lane Grantham Lincolnshire NG31 7UF		
E-mail address:	admin@granthamprep.co.uk		
Telephone number:	01476 593293		
Fax number:	01476 593293		
Headteacher:	Mrs K A Korcz BSc (Hons) Cert Ed		
Proprietor:	A for E Ltd owned by International Education Systems Ltd		
Lead Inspector:	Mr K G Williams		
Dates of inspection:	8 - 11 November 2004		

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