

# Grafton House Preparatory School

Independent School

Inspection report

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DfES Registration Number	357/6001
Unique Reference Number	130399
Inspection number	310529
Inspection dates	19 – 20 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Caroline Broomhead HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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

Grafton House Preparatory School opened in 1991. It is situated in Ashton under Lyne in Greater Manchester. The school is registered with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to provide full time education for up to 104 children aged three to eleven years. There are currently 75 on roll in this age range. Thirty six of these children are aged three to four years and receive government grant funding. There are no children who have a statement of special educational needs. There are two children for whom English is an additional language. The school is also registered with Ofsted Children's Directorate to provide day care for up to 25 children aged three months to three years, and for out of school provision before and after school and during school holidays, for up to 25 children. The day care and out of school provision was last inspected by Ofsted in November 2005. The current proprietor purchased the school from the previous owner in 2004. The current headteacher has been in post since January 2006.

## Evaluation of the school

Grafton House is a well established school which makes good provision for the education and care of its pupils. The pupils love coming to school and are very proud of their good progress and achievements. Relationships throughout the school are outstanding. The staff and pupils respect each other and value individual differences. In this warm and happy environment the pupils grow into confident, mature young people who are well prepared to move on to their next school. The parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. The school meets most of the independent school regulations, although has some improvements to make to its written policies and procedures.

## Quality of education

The curriculum for the younger children is good; it is firmly rooted in the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage. This is used well as the basis for teachers' planning and for assessing and recording the pupils' development. In the pre-school class the good range of indoor and outdoor activities encourage pupils to develop enquiring minds and foster independence and co-operation

with others. As they move into the Reception class discrete literacy and numeracy sessions ensure that basic skills continue to be well developed. By the end of Reception year the pupils have made good progress towards the Early Learning Goals and exceeded expectations for their age.

The good curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6 follows the programmes of study in the National Curriculum. There are strengths in the provision for personal, social and health education, English and mathematics, and increasingly information and communication technology as a result of the proprietor's recent investment in additional equipment. The proprietor has further enhanced the curriculum by providing specialist teaching in music, Spanish, French and sports, both within the school day and after school. Each pupil learns to play at least one musical instrument. All pupils are taught to swim. Facilities for sport on site are limited, particularly for the older pupils; the school compensates for this by an arrangement to use the playing fields at a local primary school for sports days. Regular visits to places of interest add to the pupils' enjoyment of the subjects they are studying.

Under the clear direction of the headteacher, the curriculum is improving. Staff have been allocated specific curriculum responsibilities and the school's development plan is beginning to guide them in these roles. Whilst each teacher is clear about which aspects of the curriculum they are responsible for teaching, the co-ordination of subjects across the school is underdeveloped and so continuity in planning is not yet secure. The headteacher is aware of this and has recently introduced effective systems for monitoring the quality of education.

The quality of teaching is good and assessment is satisfactory and improving. Teachers know their pupils well and plan activities which capture their interest and imagination. Those pupils who may be falling behind or struggling are identified early and given individual attention to help them overcome their difficulties. The school uses external advice very effectively to support pupils' special educational needs. Teachers usually set tasks which are matched to pupils' abilities, although more thought could be given when setting writing tasks so that some pupils are so not reliant on the teacher's help. In the best lessons the pupils are encouraged to be independent, to solve problems and to present their results to others. The teachers build carefully on what the pupils have already learned and use questioning very effectively to keep a check on their understanding. The pupils show outstanding attitudes to learning and most make good progress. They are eager to participate in lessons, know what they are good at and politely but confidently seek extra help when they need it. However, they have a cautious view about what they expect to achieve in the national tests at the end of Year 6. Results show that those who left school at age 11 in 2006 reached standards at least in line with national expectations for their age. Current assessments are more robust and indicate that the Year 6 pupils are expected to achieve above average results this year. Arrangements

for assessing pupils' learning are satisfactory, but the information obtained is not always used as effectively as it could be to set challenging targets for all pupils so that they achieve the even higher standards which some are capable of.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The pupils develop a strong empathy and understanding of their own and others' feelings through, for example, poetry. They have a love of life and learning and are amazed at what they find out about the world around them, for example, in science when they see friction through investigations about forces. Daily assemblies bring the school together to share and celebrate achievements and to give thought to how help can be given to people in the world who are in need. Fund raising activities bring a sense of fun and community achievement.

From an early age the pupils are taught to respect each other and adults. They learn to share and take turns and to be courteous. They respond well to the sense of order and discipline in the school and know what is expected of them. Their behaviour is outstanding. As they mature they politely express their views and contribute to decisions about school rules. They become more aware of their own and other's safety. The school provides a varied menu of healthy meals at lunchtimes and snacks for those joining after school clubs. The pupils are encouraged to be physically active at regular times during the day and after school.

The pupils enjoy the many visits to museums, theatres and the zoo. The school is open and welcoming to people from all faiths and cultures and actively seeks to promote this diversity in every day life in school. Parents and other visitors come into school and share their values, beliefs and customs and pupils feel as they though they know much about different lifestyles and cultures.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school makes good provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. However, some of its written policies and record keeping procedures lack the necessary rigour or are not in line with the most up to date national guidance. The pupils are well supervised at all times and say they feel safe at school. Good arrangements are in place to protect people's safety; risk assessments are routinely carried out to avoid any potential hazards. The school is aware of pupils' medical or dietary needs and takes steps to ensure that these are met. Suitable routines are in place to promote hygienic practice with the very young

children. The school has addressed the issues which were raised in the child care inspection of 2005 regarding hand washing, seeking parents' permission for medical treatment, and ensuring that plug sockets are covered. Appropriate child protection policies and procedures are in place and designated staff are trained for their roles. Other staff have received internal guidance on child protection matters, although this now needs to be updated. There is a satisfactory policy on first aid and staff are trained in accordance with requirements. The admission register does not meet DfES requirements and some details are missing from attendance registers. The staff take care when planning off-site visits, but the written procedures and records are not clear and do not conform to DfES guidance. The school's draft Accessibility Plan does not yet meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The proprietor has satisfactory recruitment procedures in place to ensure that all staff and volunteers have undergone the necessary checks before commencing work at the school. A central staff register is kept and this is being amended in line with latest DfES statutory requirements. All staff and volunteers have had the required enhanced checks with the Criminal Records Bureau.

## School's premises and accommodation

The school occupies a large house in the centre of the town. The grounds provide adequate space for the young children to play outside, but space for the older pupils to enjoy sports activities is more limited. The proprietor has helpfully installed soft playground surfaces for all ages. Some of the classrooms feel a little cramped but are within government guidelines. The proprietor is reviewing the use of classrooms to try to improve this situation. The school does not have a suitable room where pupils who are ill can be looked after. At present they are expected to use the very tiny staff room and this is not a satisfactory arrangement.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The regular newsletter keeps parents informed about events that are taking place at the school. The school's prospectus had a number of omissions which were rectified during the inspection and a revised version is now available for parents and prospective parents. The school is planning to introduce a Parents' Handbook to provide all the detailed information parents need each year. The parents speak highly of the school and the progress their children have made since starting there. However, some are unsure about the complaints procedures. The school is intending to send a copy of the procedure to all

parents. A report is sent annually to parents giving information about their child's general welfare and progress at school. However, it does not always include details of pupils' levels of attainment in the different subjects or tell parents how well the younger children have achieved against the Early Learning Goals.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school has satisfactory arrangements in place for handling complaints. There were no formal complaints in the past year.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- ensure that the school's written policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school has regard to DfES guidance *Health and safety of pupils on educational visits (reference HSPV2)* and is effectively implemented (paragraph 3(2)(c))
- maintain an admission register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 3(9)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

## What the school could do to improve further

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

- use assessment data consistently to plan lessons and set challenging targets for individual pupils across all classes
- provide parents with more detailed information about their children's attainment in all curriculum areas

- formalise the school's curriculum policy and ensure that there is planning for continuity and progression in all subjects throughout the age range



## School details

Name of school	Grafton House Preparatory School		
DfES number	357/6001		
Unique reference number	130399		
Type of school	Preparatory school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1991		
Age range of pupils	3 - 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 46	Girls: 29	Total: 75
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 6	Girls: 10	Total: 16
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2850		
Address of school	1 Warrington Street Ashton under Lyne Tameside OL6 6XB		
Telephone number	0161 343 3015		
Fax number	0161 343 3015		
Email address	grafton.house@btconnect.com		
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Colgan		
Proprietor	Mrs Joan Spours		
Reporting inspector	Caroline Broomhead HMI		
Dates of inspection	19 – 20 June 2007		