

The Drive Preparatory School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	846/6020
Unique Reference Number	131127
Inspection number	316927
Inspection dates	17-18 October
Reporting inspector	Angela Cook

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 Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

The Drive Preparatory School is a co-educational school for children aged three to 16 years. It is not selective, and is located on two sites on a main residential road in Hove. The sites, comprising the pre-preparatory department and the upper school, occupy large houses and are within a short walk of each other. The school opened in 1996 as a preparatory school for children aged three to 14, extending its age range to 16 in 2002. It supports pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those for whom English is an additional language. There are currently 95 pupils on roll, which include 15 in the Nursery who are funded under the Nursery Scheme. This is the first inspection of the main school leading to a published report. The early years provision was inspected in 2005.

Evaluation of the school

The overall quality of education and care provided by the Drive Preparatory School is satisfactory with some good aspects. The provision of positive learning experiences for pupils in the pre-preparatory department is good. Parents are unanimous in their praise for the school. There are a number of regulations which the school does not meet.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory with some good features. The school offers a broad curriculum which includes a variety of performing arts. It places a strong emphasis on providing a solid foundation for pupils' future well-being, in terms not only of literacy and numeracy, but also of modern languages, offering both French and Spanish to all in the upper school. Schemes of work are in place and meet requirements, but planning does not clearly show how continuity and progression are managed for the mixed-age classes in all subjects. This applies particularly to personal, social and health education (PSHE), which is taught in several areas across the curriculum, including citizenship. Year 11 pupils have weekly careers guidance. Foundation stage pupils benefit from an interesting range of indoor and outdoor activities that promote their learning. After-school clubs, including performing arts, football and chess, are open to all ages. Pupils are encouraged to develop and practise their skills within a supportive environment. Performing arts are a strength, with the school winning recognition in local speech

and drama competitions. Although the school meets the requirement to provide physical education, the inspectors agree with the older pupils who say they have little timetabled physical education. The quantity, quality and range of resources are limited in some subjects, and insufficient in science.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory, with some good aspects. Consistently good teaching in the reception class, coupled with a wide range of interesting and well-planned activities, fosters the pupils' desire to learn. Teachers have good subject knowledge and endeavour to make learning fun. For example, skilful use of a game and clear questioning helped Foundation Stage pupils to use the appropriate vocabulary to describe different shapes. In some lessons, planning lacks sufficient detail and the use of time is poorly managed, for example by starting late. Pupils are not regularly given opportunities to assess their own learning against agreed targets. Factual misunderstandings are sometimes left uncorrected when work is marked. The school is working towards ensuring that assessment of pupils' understanding from the previous lesson is used in planning the next, but this is not yet consistent practice.

Pupils of all abilities make good progress overall; this is due partly to the small class sizes which enable individual support to be provided by caring teachers. However, although teachers know their pupils well, higher attaining learners, often advanced by a year, are not always provided with sufficient challenge in the learning opportunities provided. Pupils were observed to be achieving well even in a lesson where teaching was less than good. Here their perceptive observations and keen enthusiasm led them to ask challenging questions; the pupils' own motivation ensures they continue to progress. The limited amount of data makes it difficult for the school to establish the progress made by all pupils, but where tracking is in place good progress is seen. Pupils with learning difficulties are effectively supported, both in class and through one-to-one tuition. All are provided with opportunities to develop self-confidence and to experience success. This engenders positive attitudes to learning. Pupils want to be at school and parents provide compelling commendations of the ways in which their children have made progress. One parent's comment that her son *'loves his school and is enthusiastic and eager to learn'* is a sentiment upheld by the majority.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Opportunities to reflect on different feelings, customs and beliefs occur in circle times as part of PSHE lessons. Pupils show an awareness of how to contribute to community life by taking part in the fundraising activities for local and international charities. They are encouraged to work together for a purpose, for example the Caribbean Fete, in which pupils were involved in organising stalls and games and raised a significant sum.

The school promotes self-discipline, and behaviour is good. Pupils are polite and respectfully friendly. Relationships between staff and pupils are generally good, and pupils show consideration towards others. Even younger pupils in the foundation stage understand that rules are to be respected and followed. Most pupils say they are very happy at school. They understand what is fair and are keen to resolve any problems. Through the appointed school council pupils learn leadership skills and how to canvas the opinions of others. The programme of citizenship promotes pupils' understanding of rights and responsibilities, but there are limited opportunities to take real responsibility or show initiative. Pupils develop their general knowledge and awareness of public institutions and services in England through the curriculum. The school teaches pupils to appreciate diversity, reinforcing the need to value others' ideas and traditions. However, pupils' knowledge of the different faiths and cultures represented in British society is only adequate.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school's provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils is satisfactory. The headteacher's attention to detail ensures that pupils are safe at the end of the day when parents are collecting them. Pupils say they feel safe at school. Although the school aims to promote healthy eating by banning chocolate and fizzy drinks and providing healthy lunches, the absence of the school cook has resulted in the provision of school meals being suspended. The curriculum effectively develops pupils' awareness of health and safety, but it does not provide the older pupils with much time to experience regular exercise. Whilst younger pupils have a variety of physical activities, older pupils do not have a similar range of opportunities. The care taken to ensure that pupils are safe during school trips is not yet reflected in the school policy. Sanctions to be used in order to promote good behaviour are not clearly defined in the behaviour policy. The school has not yet developed a three year plan to fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Concerns raised by some pupils during the inspection are being examined by the appropriate bodies.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Not all of the necessary checks have been completed for all staff prior to their appointment being confirmed, for example the Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) check and that on medical fitness. A single central register is being compiled providing details of all requisite checks and the dates on which they were completed, but is not yet fully in place.

School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises are satisfactory. Some of the accommodation, for example some light and airy classrooms in the upper school, offers pleasant learning environments. In some other areas the accommodation is cramped and not suitable, for example the changing rooms. The provision for science is not adequate for the

current class size, because the conditions curtail practical work. Learning is inhibited because, for safety reasons, experiments become a list of tasks to complete rather than investigations enabling skills to be developed. The level of maintenance and the standard of decoration in several areas are poor. Worn carpet tiles are hazardous. Inspectors concur with pupils who say there is a lack of hygiene in some areas in the school. Pupils are not aware that all toilets are designated either for boys or girls, as some have served for both. Mats covering the grassed area enable outside play at the upper site even when damp, and a large climbing frame adds to the pupils' enjoyment at break times.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides an up-to-date prospectus for parents and prospective parents, in addition to an information booklet for current parents. The website provides additional interesting information, including photos and details of school trips. The school does not provide all the required information about admissions and exclusions policy, and funding information for the local authority.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school is in the process of developing its complaints procedure so that it fully complies with all the regulations, but it did not do so at the time of the inspection.

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 the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- increase the quality, quantity and range of classroom resources particularly in science (paragraph 1(3)(f))
- establish a framework to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and utilise this information to plan teaching so that all students can be effectively challenged (paragraph 1(3)(g)).

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

- prepare and implement a written policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school which has regard to DCSF guidance *Health and safety of pupils on educational visits* (paragraph 3(2)(c))

- include within the behaviour policy the sanctions to be used in the event of a pupil misbehaving (paragraph 3(2)(d)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- ensure that prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, medical fitness checks are carried out (paragraph 4(2)(a))
- ensure that enhanced CRB checks are obtained for all those working at the school, whether under contract of employment, under a contract for services, or as volunteers who have substantial contact with or substantial access to the pupils (paragraph 4(2)(b))
- ensure that the register kept by the proprietor in relation to each member of staff complies with the regulations by indicating the dates on which the required checks were completed or certificate obtained (paragraph 4C(2 and 3)).

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

- ensure that, having regard to the number, age and needs of pupils, all classrooms are appropriate in size to allow for effective teaching, and ensure that no areas of the school compromise health and safety (paragraph 5(j))
- ensure that separate toilets are provided for male and female pupils (paragraph 5(k))
- ensure that where food is served there are adequate facilities for its hygienic preparation, serving and consumption (paragraph 5(m))
- ensure that classrooms and other parts of the school are maintained in a tidy, clean and hygienic state (paragraph 5(n))
- ensure that there is a satisfactory standard and adequate maintenance of decoration (paragraph 5(q))
- ensure that flooring is appropriate and is in good condition (paragraph 5(s)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- provide particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for admissions and exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e))
- provide the local authority, where it wholly or partially funds a pupil, with an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil, and provide this information on request to the Secretary of State (paragraph 6(7)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of procedures for handling complaints (standard 7) and must:

- ensure that the complaints procedure stipulates that where there is a panel hearing of a complaint there is provision that one person on the panel is independent of the management and running of the school (paragraph 7(g))
- ensure that the complaints procedure stipulates that the complainant, proprietor, headteacher and, where relevant, the person complained about, are given a copy of any findings and recommendations (paragraph 7(i))
- ensure that the complaints procedure stipulates that written records will be kept of all complaints indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a panel hearing (paragraph 7(j)).

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

School details

Name of school	The Drive Preparatory School		
DCSF number	846/6020		
Unique reference number	131127		
Type of school	Co-educational primary and secondary school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1996		
Age range of pupils	3-16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 45	Girls: 35	Total: 80
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 7	Girls: 8	Total: 15
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 4	Girls: 1	Total: 5
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2685-£5850		
Address of school	101 The Drive Hove East Sussex BN3 3JE		
Telephone number	01273 738444		
Fax number	01273 738444		
Email address	sue@driveprep.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs S Parkinson		
Proprietor	Mr N Faulkner		
Reporting inspector	Angela Cook		
Dates of inspection	17-18 October 2007		