

Grantham Preparatory School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	925/6031
Unique Reference Number	120738
URN for registered childcare and social care	242204 314362
Inspection number	329419
Inspection dates	18 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Joanne Harvey

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). The inspection of childcare was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.

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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.

The inspection of registered provision¹ was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focussed principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

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 3 and 11. At the time of the inspection there were 104 pupils on roll, 53 boys and 51 girls. Currently three pupils attend part-time in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The school also runs an after school crèche for its own pupils which operates between 8am and 9am and 3pm and 6pm. A small number of pupils receive extra help with their learning and the school adopts the code of practice for special educational needs.

The school's mission statement emphasises its dedication to the pursuit of academic, musical and sporting excellence. 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 Limited, who acquired A for E Limited in May 2004. Currently, two directors of 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.

¹ Schools which provide childcare for children from birth until the term in which they reach their third birthday must register this provision separately with Ofsted.

Evaluation of the school

Grantham Preparatory School provides an outstanding quality of education. It offers a rich learning environment where all pupils are highly valued and given the opportunity to shine, whatever their needs, talents and interests. The school is very well led by the headteacher, supported by the staff. Together, they ensure an exceptionally caring and positive ethos throughout the school. The school has developed well since the last inspection. It has implemented the recommendations of the last report to provide appropriate facilities for pupils when they are sick, to ensure that fencing is of good condition, that there is a suitable supply of hot water to wash basins and that details of the complaints procedure are available to parents. It now complies with all but one regulation. Pupils and parents quite rightly express a high level of satisfaction with the school where pupils become well rounded individuals who are able to pursue a range of interests to a high level.

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding. It has many exemplary elements which help to ensure that, over their time at the school, pupils make exceptionally good progress and are prepared extremely well for the next stage of their schooling and their future lives. Pupils attain exceptionally high standards, not only in English, mathematics and science, but also in a range of other subjects. A very high percentage of pupils are successful in gaining entry to the independent and grammar schools of their choice. This is not only as a result of outstanding teaching but also because they are offered the opportunity to take part in a very extensive range of specialist and extra-curricular studies, particularly in the visual and performing arts and in physical education. The high standards reached in these and other subjects are evident immediately on entering the school, where it is apparent that everyone gets a chance to shine. There is a wonderful array of pupils' work to be seen along with many photographs and trophies which celebrate the achievements of individuals and teams.

Planning for the curriculum is very detailed for each subject and year group, underpinned by comprehensive schemes of work. These are carefully extended and developed on a weekly and often daily basis to make sure that everyone is included and pupils' needs and interests are being met. Parents are kept well informed and involved with what pupils are studying. There is a carefully thought-out programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education which helps to ensure that pupils' personal development, particularly their social, moral and spiritual development is outstanding. Although it is already good, pupils say they would like more opportunities to further develop their cultural understanding through first-hand experiences. The curriculum is extremely well supported by a range of interesting and relevant visits to places of interest. These include the in-depth study of the local area and often go far beyond. Pupils often follow these visits with extended personal study of an area or a historical character, and publish their research in beautifully presented books.

An impressive array of clubs further extends learning. Pupils say they want to attend them all but, when pressed, say the sporting clubs are their favourites but that band is also extremely popular. Pupils study French throughout their school career and a Spanish club has recently started.

Speaking and listening skills are particularly well promoted. Pupils are well used to debating challenging subjects, delivering recitations and are well prepared for public speaking exams. This develops high levels of confidence and self-esteem as do the many opportunities they take to share their performances with others. For example, pupils take part in the Colsterworth and Grantham festivals for music and drama or in school shows which are very professionally staged.

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding and results in pupils who thrive and make outstanding progress. The promotion of strong relationships, excellent subject knowledge and meticulous planning ensures that pupils are highly motivated and work extremely hard. Clear learning objectives ensure pupils know exactly what is expected of them and become skilled at evaluating their own success. As a result, learning proceeds at a rapid pace and pupils achieve the challenging targets set for them whilst their enjoyment remains high. Subject specialists are used well to further motivate and stretch pupils so, for example, they reach high standards very quickly in music with a remarkable range of instruments or enjoy consistent success in sporting competitions. Teaching is regularly observed and the outcomes of these observations are used as a basis for planning future developments.

The school assesses pupils' learning in a variety of ways. Small class sizes ensure that teachers get to know individuals well and can plan accordingly to meet their individual needs. Often, this enables them to offer individual tuition and immediate feedback which helps to ensure that progress is rapid. Pupils are given challenging but achievable personal and academic targets which they say help them to do even better. In academic subjects regular testing occurs and the results are used to inform future planning. However, although much improved, systems for monitoring these results do not yet make the best use of this information for analysing progress over time across the whole school.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for pupils' personal development is outstanding. Observations and discussions confirm their exceptional levels of enjoyment in lessons and at social times. It is no surprise that attendance is good and pupils are highly motivated to make the most of everything the school has to offer.

Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are extremely polite and respectful, and genuinely care about the well-being of others. They say they feel extremely safe in school. They do say they might fall out from time to time, perhaps on the football field, but that they are well equipped to sort out their own disagreements which never last for long.

Pupils take their many roles and responsibilities seriously, either as members of the school council, head boy or girl, or leading house teams. Although they are keen for success in any competition, there is also a strong sense of team work, making the most of everyone's various talents and making sure everyone is included. They learn about public institutions and services and talk articulately about their understanding of democracy and their right to have, and use, their voice. Very early on, they begin to make choices about their lives and express their preferences.

Pupils recognise that, for example, running charity events and working in the school shop teaches them valuable business enterprise skills and prepares them well for the future, as do lessons in touch typing and attendance at cookery club. They show a remarkable understanding of how making the most of all these experiences will stand them in good stead for the future.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The school takes all reasonable steps to minimise risks to pupils' welfare, health and safety and provides an outstanding level of care for them. All essential risk assessments, policies and records are in place. There are robust procedures for recruiting staff and safeguarding children which comply with the latest guidance. A single central register is in place recording that all necessary checks have been carried out. Staff are appropriately trained and well aware of child protection duties and procedures. All staff have appropriate first aid qualifications and are well versed in procedures. An appropriate record is kept of any injuries or accidents and the required range of health and safety checks are regularly carried out, including frequent fire drills.

Staff demonstrate vigilance in ensuring pupils' safety and security around the building. Pupils talk confidently about safety procedures and the ways they can keep themselves and each other safe. They demonstrate an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles, both through their healthy eating choices and their love of physical activity.

The school fulfils its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is outstanding. Children enjoy a vibrant curriculum delivered through topic themes which allow them to experiment and revisit their learning in hands-on and practical ways. This ensures that they enjoy every minute of their time in the setting. They are having so much fun they often do not realise how hard that they are working. As a consequence, they make rapid progress from a wide range of starting points, both in their academic and in their personal development. Children behave well. They are taught to cooperate and share, and quite quickly become well-rounded individuals, able to make choices. By the time they leave the EYFS, most have achieved all of their Early Learning Goals and exceeded the levels expected for their age. Lots of opportunities

to develop speaking and listening skills, and the rigorous approach to teaching phonics, ensure that children make rapid progress in their reading and later their writing skills. Because adults get to know children so well, they are able to use their regular assessments of children's progress. The setting leaders' good knowledge of child development enables her to plan activities which stimulate and challenge children to do their best and staff make sure that everyone is included. Outstandingly active and energetic teaching, with a perfect balance between child-initiated and teacher-led work and excellent questioning skills, really makes children think for themselves and become independent problem-solvers. Leaders are working hard to ensure that this exceptional level of practice is consistently applied across the setting.

The school crèche, which also includes children from the EYFS, continues with the same themes, ethos and approaches after school, modifying its activities to suit children whether they need to rest, play or continue their learning.

Leadership and management of the setting are outstanding. Leaders know the setting well. They are never complacent and are always looking for ways to improve. They recognise that curriculum provision for children outdoors is predominantly within a built landscape. Although a wonderful range of activities are taken outside, there are currently fewer opportunities for children to explore the natural environment on an ongoing basis. Similarly, there is not a covered all weather area which limits the use of the area throughout the year.

Ensuring the welfare, health and safety of children is paramount throughout the early years' provision, including the crèche. Staff are vigilant about security. All staff, including those in the crèche, have suitable qualifications and staff to child ratios are exceedingly well met. All the required policies and risk assessment procedures are in place and well known to all adults. Safeguarding and child protection requirements comply with regulations. There is a member of staff with a paediatric first aid certificate and records regarding medicines meet requirements.

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 the one listed below.

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

- ensure that parents are aware they can request particulars of policies relating to bullying, child protection, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, and sanctions adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving (see paragraph 3 (2) of the Regulations) (paragraph 6(2)(h)).

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:

- further refine systems for recording and checking on pupil progress which draw together and present information from all phases of the school
- further develop the quality of the curriculum provided outdoors for the EYFS by providing a covered and secure area with ready access to the natural environment.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	Satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	✓			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	✓			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	✓			
How well do children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage relative to their starting points and capabilities?	✓			
How good are the personal development and well-being of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	✓			
What is the quality of welfare, health and safety of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	✓			
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	✓			
What is the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage including, where relevant, the quality of childcare?	✓			

School details

Name of school	Grantham Preparatory School		
DCSF number	925/6031		
Unique reference number	120738		
EY URN (for registered childcare only)	242204		
	314362		
Type of school	Preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	October 1986		
Age range of pupils	3–11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 53	Girls: 51	Total: 104
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls: 2	Total: 3
Number of pupils aged 0-3 in registered childcare provision	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6600		
Childcare Fees	£4.30 per hour		
Address of school	Gorse Lane Grantham Lincolnshire NG31 7UF		
Telephone number	01476 593293		
Email address	admin@granthampreparatory.co.uk kkorcz@hotmail.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs K Korcz		
Proprietor	A for E Ltd.		
Reporting inspector	Joanne Harvey		
Dates of inspection	18 September 2008		