



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Regulatory Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

The Grove Independent School

February 2022

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School's Details

School	The Grove Independent School			
DfE number	826/6002			
Early Years registration number	EY366450			
Address	The Grove Independent School Redland Drive Milton Keynes MK5 8HD			
Telephone number	01908 690590			
Email address	office@groveschool.co.uk			
Principal	Mrs Deborah Berkin			
Proprietor	Mrs Deborah Berkin			
Age range	0 to 13			
Number of pupils on roll	255			
	EYFS	109	Juniors (Years 1 to 6)	125
	Seniors (Years 7 and 8)	21		
Inspection dates	22 to 25 February 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 The Grove Independent School is a co-educational preparatory day school. It was founded in 1984 by the current principal, who is also the sole proprietor. The school has been on its current site in central Milton Keynes since 1989. It has no governing body, but an advisory board has been appointed to support the principal and assist in proprietorial oversight.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has opened a new building with purpose-built classrooms for Year 7 and 8 pupils, new facilities for art and technology, a performance space which doubles as a common room for Years 7 and 8, changing rooms and showers. New boilers and roof repairs have been made to the nursery building and some toilets have been refurbished.
- 1.3 The inspection took into account the circumstances faced by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by government guidance at various points of the pandemic.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school aims to inspire its pupils to develop a love of learning with a thoughtful and considerate attitude towards others. It seeks to provide an excellent education within a caring community where all pupils are known and respected and encouraged to fulfil their potential. The school aspires to create a welcoming family atmosphere which encourages strong moral and spiritual beliefs based on Christian values.

About the pupils

- 1.5 Pupils come from a range of professional and business backgrounds living within Milton Keynes and nearby towns. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average for those taking the test. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school has identified 14 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) which include dyslexia, anxiety and other learning needs. None of these receives additional specialist help. English is an additional language (EAL) for 4 pupils whose needs are supported by their class teacher. The school has identified 22 pupils as being the more able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them and for other pupils because of their special talents in music, art and sport.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school does not meet all of the required standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage and associated requirements, and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Good behaviour is promoted, admission and attendance registers are maintained as required, and a disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils do not pay due regard to current statutory guidance. Although a safeguarding policy is drawn up, it does not reflect all areas that the guidance requires. Appropriate records are not maintained of all safeguarding and welfare issues. Similarly, arrangements to guard against bullying are unsuitable because record keeping is insufficiently detailed to identify incidents which are possible bullying issues.
- 2.10 Health and safety requirements are not met because relevant concerns are not identified and addressed with sufficient promptness. Records of maintenance checks are insufficient to demonstrate that issues are properly attended to; and oversight, including by the proprietor, lacks appropriate rigour and is not proactive.
- 2.11 Arrangements to prevent fire do not meet requirements because a fire risk assessment has not been carried out by a competent person. Not all flammable materials are stored in a safe space.
- 2.12 Arrangements for first aid are insufficient because first aid boxes are not always adequately stocked.
- 2.13 Pupils are not properly supervised at all times during the school day because the required ratio of adults to children is not consistently met.
- 2.14 Approaches to risk assessment lack a strategy sufficiently effective to identify all risks and do not ensure that appropriate action is taken to reduce those risks that are identified.

- 2.15 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety in paragraphs 9 and 15, the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 (accessibility plan), and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met, but those in paragraphs 7 [safeguarding], 10 [bullying], 11 [health and safety], 12 [fire prevention], 13 [first aid], 14 [supervision of pupils] and 16 [risk assessment] are not met.

Action point 1

The school must ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by drawing up and implementing a policy that has full regard to *Keeping Children Safe in Education* and other statutory guidance; and keeping comprehensive records of all safeguarding and welfare issues [paragraph 7(a) and (b); EYFS 3.4 and 3.7].

Action point 2

The school must ensure that bullying in the school is prevented as far as reasonably practicable by keeping comprehensive records of all potential bullying issues [paragraph 10].

Action point 3

The school must ensure that the health and safety policy is rigorously implemented so that procedures identify and address concerns promptly; careful records are maintained in relation to all areas of maintenance checks; rigorous and proactive oversight pervade all health and safety matters; and the proprietor monitors the effectiveness of health and safety procedures suitably [paragraph 11; EYFS 3.55].

Action point 4

The school must meet the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 by ensuring that a fire risk assessment is carried out by a competent person, and that all flammable materials are stored in a safe space [paragraph 12; EYFS 3.56].

Action point 5

The school must ensure that first aid is administered in a timely and competent manner, in particular, ensure that first aid boxes are always adequately stocked [paragraph 13; EYFS 3.51].

Action point 6

The school must ensure that pupils are appropriately supervised throughout the school day, including children in the EYFS [paragraph 14; EYFS 3.29 and 3.32].

Action point 7

The school must draw up and implement a written risk assessment policy and ensure appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified [paragraph 16(a) and (b); EYFS 3.65].

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.16 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.17 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.18 Acoustics and lighting are appropriate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.
- 2.19 Toilet, showering and changing facilities are unsuitable because the fabric of showering facilities and changing accommodation for pupils aged 11 and over is in an unsatisfactory condition.
- 2.20 Accommodation for pupils' medical needs is unsuitable because of structural damage to the facility.
- 2.21 The premises are not maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety and there are some inadequate security arrangements, including in the EYFS.
- 2.22 The water supply is not adequate.
- 2.23 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation in paragraphs 26, 27 and 29 are met, but those in paragraphs 23 [toilets and changing accommodation], 24 [medical accommodation], 25 [maintenance] and 28 [water supply] are not met.**

Action point 8

The school must ensure that suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided for the sole use of pupils [paragraph 23(1)(a)].

Action point 9

The school must ensure that suitable changing accommodation and showers are provided for pupils aged 11 years or over at the start of the school year who receive physical education [paragraph 23(1)(c)].

Action point 10

The school must ensure that the school premises, accommodation and facilities are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils is ensured, including by: controlling entry to the EYFS; engaging a competent person to undertake a comprehensive survey of the site and subsequently carrying out a programme of repairs within a specified timeframe, to include remedying structural damage to the medical room and other incidences of rotting wood and water damage [paragraphs 24(1)(a) and 25; EYFS 3.55 and 3.63].

Action point 11

The school must ensure that sufficient and suitable drinking water facilities are provided; that they are readily accessible at all times when the premises are in use; and they are in a separate area from the toilet facilities [paragraph 28(1)(a) and (2)(a) and (b)]; EYFS 3.55].

Action point 12

The school must ensure that all toilets and urinals have an adequate supply of cold water and washing facilities have an adequate supply of hot and cold water [paragraph 28(1)(b); EYFS 3.55].

Action point 13

The school must ensure that cold water supplies that are suitable for drinking are clearly marked as such [paragraph 28(1)(c); EYFS 3.55].

Action point 14

The school must carry out a suitable legionella risk assessment to ensure hot and cold water systems are safely maintained [paragraph 28(1)(a), (b) and (c); EYFS 3.55].

PART 6 – Provision of information

- 2.24 Most required information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any pupils with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress.
- 2.25 The school's safeguarding policy was not posted on the school's website until the final day of the inspection. Not all required information is provided to parents of children in the EYFS.
- 2.26 The standard relating to the provision of information in paragraph 32 is not met.**

Action point 15

The school must ensure that the following information is available to parents and/or carers: the school's safeguarding policy; how the EYFS is being delivered in the setting, and how more information can be accessed; the range and type of activities and experience provided for children, the daily routines of the setting, and how parents and carers can share learning at home; and how the setting supports children with special educational needs and disabilities [paragraph 32(1)(c); EYFS 3.74].

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.27 Parental complaints, if any, are handled through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant.
- 2.28 Records of complaints are not kept appropriately, including whether or not a complaint is successful, and any action taken as a result. The school does not ensure that the outcome of complaints relating to EYFS requirements is notified to complainants within 28 days; nor provide information on how parents/carers may contact Ofsted should they believe that the provider is not meeting EYFS requirements.
- 2.29 The standard relating to the handling of complaints in paragraph 33 is not met.**

Action point 16

The school must ensure that a suitable written record is kept of all complaints, including whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing and any action taken by the school as a result, regardless of whether they are upheld [paragraph 33(j)(i) and (ii); EYFS 3.75].

Action point 17

The school must ensure that the outcome of complaints relating to EYFS requirements is notified to complainants within 28 days; and provides information on how parents/carers may contact Ofsted should they believe that the provider is not meeting EYFS requirements [EYFS 3.75 and 3.76].

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.30 The proprietor does not ensure that those having leadership and management responsibilities demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and actively promote the well-being of the pupils. Arrangements for the supervision and training of EYFS staff are inadequate.

2.31 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school in paragraph 34 is not met.

Action point 18

The school must ensure that those having leadership and management responsibilities demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and have time to fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are met consistently, and actively promote the well-being of the pupils, including through providing appropriate arrangements for supervision and training of staff in the EYFS [paragraph 34 (1)(a), (b) and (c); EYFS 3.21 – 3.23].

3. The quality and standards of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness: the quality and standards of the early years provision

- 3.1 The overall effectiveness of the early years provision is inadequate.
- 3.2 Leaders implement a curriculum that supports the children's development in the prime areas of their learning, including those with SEND and any other additional needs. Baseline assessments are not undertaken on entry to the setting and so starting points are only established later from which progress is measured. Subsequent assessment procedures are effective.
- 3.3 Staff are unable to capture spontaneous observations of children and evidence them due to a lack of equipment in the setting. Transition visits to the next room are planned to support readiness for the next stage in children's learning. Children are happy in the setting; they separate easily from parents and engage in activities readily. Due to the levels of care that the setting provides, children consistently demonstrate that they feel safe, secure and happy.
- 3.4 Leaders do not fulfil their statutory duties to ensure regulatory compliance in safeguarding and several areas of health and safety. There is little evidence of a commitment on the part of leadership and management to continuous development through the evaluation of current practice.
- 3.5 The requirements from the previous inspection, including to develop and formalise a supervision policy and monitor the required procedures to support the welfare, training and further development of staff, have not been met. The additional recommendation to actively promote British values in children's learning experience is not yet fully embedded.

Quality of education

- 3.6 The quality of education requires improvement.
- 3.7 The curriculum is suitably balanced to support the children's development in their communication and language, physical development and their personal and social development. However, it does not challenge the children to develop their skills and understanding to any great extent and there is little evidence of leaders monitoring the implementation of the curriculum effectively.
- 3.8 Assessment procedures are effective and ensure that children's progress is being monitored to ensure they are achieving the expected developmental milestones for their age. Staff have been given appropriate training on the revised EYFS framework and know how babies and young children develop but they do not always demonstrate a suitably deep understanding of the learning and development requirements of the EYFS. Educational programmes are based and planned around monthly themes.
- 3.9 There is some planning for children's next steps but opportunities are missed in planning to reflect individual children's interests. Positive feedback is given to the children through appropriate use of praise and encouragement, which helps them to acquire the skills and attitudes to learn effectively. Staff read and sing with the children, encouraging them to repeat words, answer simple questions and join in with songs and actions. Toddlers enthusiastically join in with action songs pointing to relevant body parts and joining in with repeated refrains. Children make sound progress and deepen their learning across the curriculum, but a lack of challenging opportunities for rich and varied experiences inside and outside the setting prevents them from developing more quickly.
- 3.10 A daily message book shared with parents is used to record routines such as sleep time, fluids taken, meals and nappy changes. Informal verbal feedback is given to parents at collection time. Parental comments in these books are limited, and any evidence of parental contribution to individual children's next steps, interests and assessments are not recorded. Babies and toddlers are regularly

taken for walks in the school grounds, extending their experience of the wider world when seeing the chickens, ducks and horses. Toddlers enjoy twice weekly music lessons. Their experiences in the setting give children a basis for their future learning, and they are effectively prepared to move on.

Behaviour and attitudes

- 3.11 Behaviour and attitudes are good.
- 3.12 Children are keen to explore the environment and play with toys and objects that are familiar to them. They respond well to the opportunities to choose from easily accessible resources and move from one activity to another with confidence. Children maintain focus on activities for appropriate periods of time for their age. Toddlers were able to listen and participate in singing and story time, showing that they were developing good habits for the future. Babies sustained high levels of concentration when exploring grains of dry rice using their fingers and hands. Children are active learners and keep trying until they achieve something. For example, one baby showed great delight in taking off her socks and shoes then went on to try and put them on again. Another baby demonstrated great pride in her achievements by gurgling and laughing on succeeding in pulling herself up to stand, looking intently at her key person for approval.
- 3.13 All children demonstrate excellent behaviour and show great respect for one another. They respond to gentle reminders from staff about how to share things and how to play co-operatively. Relationships with parents are positive and parents ensure that their children attend regularly, developing secure routines and good habits for future learning. The setting has suitable procedures to investigate unexpected absences.

Personal development

- 3.14 The personal development of children is inadequate.
- 3.15 Effective care practices for individual children support children's emotional security and development of their character. Although they feel safe, happy and secure, security of the accommodation is lax and overall care is not effective.
- 3.16 Staff reassure and respond effectively to their needs in a sensitive and caring manner. Children are happy to meet visitors and engage with them. The key person system helps children form secure attachments and the standard of care given to each child effectively promotes their well-being and independence. Children are encouraged by staff to take risks and be adventurous in various activities, such as negotiating the wooden slope to access the climbing frame and slide in the outdoor area. Staff help children to lead a healthy lifestyle from the very beginning of their time at the setting. They are provided with high-quality cooked food, fresh drinking water and fruit. All children have regular access to outside areas that are well equipped to promote physical activity. Toddlers enjoy twice weekly gym lessons. Hygiene practices ensure that the personal needs of the children at this age are met appropriately. However, staff do not always wear protective clothing when dealing with such needs. Staff encourage children to wash their hands before meals and they support those unable to do it independently.
- 3.17 Individual staff give priority to safeguarding and are aware of their responsibilities to ensure that they meet the EYFS statutory requirements for safeguarding, welfare and learning and development. However, staffing arrangements do not always meet the regulatory requirements. There are occasions when the adult to child ratios are below the statutory requirements for children under two. Regulatory compliance in safeguarding is not met because many elements required by *Keeping Children Safe in Education* are missing from the school's safeguarding arrangements, which were not published as required at the time the inspection was announced. Safeguarding is unsatisfactory with regard to record keeping across the school.

- 3.18 Not all requirements to ensure health and safety are met across the school site and within the setting, including the implementation of school policies for fire prevention, first aid and risk assessment. The setting prepares children effectively for life in modern Britain by allowing them to make decisions independently, such as what toy to play with and what activity to explore. As staff encourage children to take turns and share, the children learn to respect and care for one another. Children celebrate some British festivals as well as those from other cultures, which promote diversity. However, there is a lack of suitable resources in the setting to support this. British values fundamental to daily life are not yet fully embedded in the setting.

Leadership and management

- 3.19 Leadership and management are inadequate.
- 3.20 Leaders and managers lack a clear and ambitious vision for the ongoing development of the provision. Self-evaluation is weak and areas for future development have not been identified effectively. The school was unable to show evidence to demonstrate the effective monitoring of standards of care and scrutiny of the curriculum. Opportunities for staff to undertake regular professional development courses to improve and update their practice are extremely limited which impacts on outcomes for the children. There is no formal staff supervision policy or procedure in place to enable individual staff to meet with managers for support and coaching to improve their personal effectiveness. This prevents appropriate discussion of issues concerning children's development including child protection concerns. The support offered to staff for their own well-being and work-related issues is extremely limited.
- 3.21 All children are well known by leaders and managers, and their needs are swiftly met. This includes those with SEND and other additional needs. The setting has ready access to specialist support from outside agencies. There is currently limited information about the setting available to parents. There is no parent handbook and key policies and procedures cannot be accessed on the school website. Parents are given verbal feedback at the end of school regarding their child's day and the activities they have been involved in. Developmental folders and next steps are shared with parents during twice yearly parents' evenings. Responses to the pre-questionnaire reveal that parents have a positive view of the setting. In interviews with inspectors, parents reported that they are appreciative of the care their children receive and of the progress their children have made. Some parents commented they would like to receive more information on the EYFS curriculum and how it is implemented in the setting. Inspection evidence shows that they do not receive all required information.
- 3.22 Regulatory compliance in safeguarding, and requirements to ensure health and safety of children and adults, including the implementation of school policies for fire prevention and first aid, are not met across the school site including within the setting.

Compliance with statutory requirements

- 3.23 In order to meet the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 fully, those responsible for the registered provision must take the following action.**

Action points for EYFS

The school must ensure that policy and procedures to safeguard children are implemented that are in line with the guidance and procedures of the relevant Local Safeguarding Partners and which fully reflect the requirements of *Keeping Children Safe in Education*. The safeguarding policy and procedures must include an explanation of the action to be taken where there are safeguarding concerns about a child and in the event of an allegation being made and these must be implemented effectively [EYFS 3.4 and 3.7].

The school must ensure that staff undertake appropriate training and other professional development opportunities to ensure they continually improve the quality learning and development experiences for children [EYFS 3.21].

The school must develop and implement a formal supervision policy to ensure appropriate arrangements for the supervision of staff who have contact with children and families [EYFS 3.22 and 3.23].

The school must ensure that children are adequately supervised and decide how to deploy staff to ensure children's needs are met [EYFS 3.29].

The school must ensure that for children under two there must be at least one member of staff for every three children [EYFS 3.32].

The school must ensure that the following information is available to parents and/or carers: how the EYFS is being delivered in the setting, and how more information can be accessed; the range and type of activities and experience provided for children, the daily routines of the setting, and how parents and carers can share learning at home; and how the setting supports children with special educational needs and disabilities [EYFS 3.74].

The school must ensure that it complies with requirements of Health and Safety legislation including fire safety requirements, and takes reasonable steps to ensure the safety of the children, staff and others on the premises including with regard to: maintenance of the premises, including the medical accommodation; suitable water supply to toilets and washrooms; and testing for legionella [EYFS 3.55 and 3.56].

The school must ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure staff and children in their care are not exposed to risks and must be able to demonstrate how they are managing risks [EYFS 3.65].

The school must ensure that all first aid boxes are appropriately stocked [EYFS 3.51].

The school must ensure that the nursery building is secure at all times [EYFS 3.63].

The school must ensure that a suitable written record is kept of all complaints, including their outcome [EYFS 3.75].

The school must ensure that the outcome of complaints relating to EYFS requirements is notified to complainants within 28 days; and provides information on how parents/carers may contact Ofsted should they believe that the provider is not meeting EYFS requirements [EYFS 3.75 and 3.76].

Recommendations for further improvement

In addition to the above action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements to its provision for children in the early years.

- Improve support for the welfare, training and further development of staff and monitor its effectiveness.
- Actively promote British values in children's learning experience by improving resources associated with this area.
- Strengthen staff understanding of the learning and development requirements of the EYFS.
- Ensure that assessment identifies starting points for children and their progress and that resultant planning reflects the needs and interests of individual children in order to improve the quality of their learning.
- Strengthen support to enable parents' and carers' understanding of the EYFS curriculum, how it is implemented in the setting and how they can access more information.

4. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Nursery	Nursery
Walnut and Maple	Nursery
Beech and Holly	Reception
Larch and Rowan	Year 1
Cedar and Birch	Year 2
Aspen	Year 3
Hawthorn and Poplar	Year 4
Chestnut and Sycamore	Year 5
Acacia and Pine	Year 6
Spruce	Year 7
Juniper	Year 8

Key findings

4.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

- Pupils of all ages demonstrate good communication skills which they apply to all areas of learning.
- Pupils achieve high academic standards by the time they leave the school.
- Pupils achieve well in extra-curricular activities (ECAs) including music, dance and drama due to the well-established arts centre run by the school.
- Older pupils thrive when teaching enables them to take leadership in their learning through independent research and collaboration, but lack of similar provision for younger pupils inhibits their development of study skills.
- The progress of younger pupils is hindered in some of their learning by tasks which are not open-ended and by over-reliance on work sheets.

4.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.

- The behaviour of pupils across the school is excellent.

- Pupils' personal development grows rapidly through opportunities for pupils to work across year groups, especially through the whole school residential travel week.
- Pupils of all ages undertake leadership roles conscientiously in a number of contexts and contribute positively to the school community.
- Pupils show well-developed moral understanding and an empathetic understanding of, and respect for, other religions and, for most pupils, cultural values.
- Pupils have a practical working knowledge of how to stay safe, including online.
- Not all pupils demonstrate the strong culture of kindness and respect for their peers characteristic of the vast majority.

Recommendations

4.3 The school should make the following improvements.

- Provide more opportunities for younger pupils to work in collaboration with their peers on open-ended tasks and reduce the use of closed tasks given on worksheets.
- Improve the academic progress of all pupils by strengthening oversight of teaching, including through equitable allocation of senior leaders' responsibilities and provision of time for leaders to fulfil their duties effectively.
- Improve all pupils' learning skills by ensuring that staff share and understand examples of the most effective teaching in which pupils take leadership in their learning.
- Ensure that the strong culture of respect evident in nearly all pupils is extended to all.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

4.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

4.5 The attainment of pupils of all ages and abilities, including those with SEND and/or EAL, and those who are more able is good. Sensitive teaching in the EYFS ensures that individual needs are catered for and enables all children to make appropriate progress. Most achieve the expected learning outcomes by the time they finish Reception. Pupils achieve considerable success in competitive examinations for entry to senior schools at 11 and 13 due to the effective implementation of the school's assessment framework and the positive, professional attitudes of most staff, who respond to assessment data by planning appropriate teaching. In discussion some pupils felt that assessments every half term place constant pressure on them, but that it was a good thing if it meant everyone achieved high standards. Based on evidence seen in lessons, workbooks and interviews with pupils, they make good progress over time. Teachers have a very secure knowledge of the pupils' strengths and weaknesses, but on occasions, the needs of lower ability pupils are not fully taken into account in planning teaching, therefore progress for them is limited.

4.6 Overall, pupils of all ages and abilities have positive attitudes to learning. Stimulating teaching in most subjects and a tangible rapport between pupil and teacher ensures that pupils have a strong desire to learn. Pupils participated fully and took great pride in their learning in lessons which allowed them to interact, discuss and explore. Pupils are keen to participate and extend their knowledge further when they experience engaging teaching which demonstrates fast pace and the posing of thought-provoking, challenging questions. They demonstrate less positive attitudes to learning when teachers rely heavily on worksheets, mismatch tasks to pupils' abilities and have lower expectations. In these lessons, pupils are less engaged with learning because they are often not encouraged to interact and expand on their views. All pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to creative subjects such as music,

drama and art. They talked passionately and enthusiastically about their participation in sport and other extra-curricular activities.

- 4.7 Pupils of all ages demonstrate strong communication skills which they successfully apply to all areas of learning. Younger pupils spoke with confidence to an audience in assembly and answered questions eagerly in lessons. Older pupils explained how specialist teaching in speech and drama provided by the school's arts centre enables them to develop strong speaking skills that give them confidence in many learning situations. Children in the EYFS use their phonic knowledge successfully to build simple words and happily engage in mark-making and letter formation activities. They enjoy sharing their books with older pupils who act as reading partners. Older pupils read clearly with expression and discuss their choice of books enthusiastically and knowledgeably with their peers. They extend their vocabulary by sharing unfamiliar words. Younger pupils write simple sentences in fluent handwriting, demonstrating excellent use of full stops and capital letters, as seen when writing captions to a story they knew well. More able pupils thrive in a culture of praise for their efforts and respond well when challenged through extension tasks. Pupils are able to explain what makes an effective persuasive text, as seen when Year 5 pupils wrote that 'A world without whales is a world without wonder'. Pupils became fully engaged and excited to put their thoughts on paper, producing writing of a high standard when they were encouraged to collaborate with their peers, but such opportunities are not consistently given.
- 4.8 Children in EYFS develop strong computational skills quickly due to high teacher expectation and rigorous and appropriate challenge given to pupils of all abilities. Simple addition and subtraction skills are embedded well in Nursery through use of number rhymes and songs. Younger pupils tell the time confidently, count money and explain lines of symmetry. The oldest pupils demonstrated excellent knowledge of algebra. The most able pupils displayed a high standard of numeracy, explaining how and why mathematics is a useful tool when studying science and geography, for example when presenting results in graphs, calculating temperature changes and total rainfall. However, the progress of some pupils in the middle years is impaired because they are not challenged sufficiently in relation to their ability. This limited progress, including through lack of suitable pace in teaching, has not been recognised and action taken to ensure improvement because there is insufficient monitoring by senior leaders.
- 4.9 Most pupils develop secure knowledge in all areas of learning and acquire skills that help them to apply their understanding. However, this is not evident in all year groups. In discussion, pupils explained that the lessons in which they make the best progress and which they find the most engaging are those with open-ended tasks that challenge them and require them to think for themselves. Inspection evidence confirms this view. Children in the EYFS use their literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects, including Mandarin and Spanish. All pupils show great creativity in art. Children in EYFS explored a number of mediums such as paint, pastel, glitter and tissue paper successfully to create pictures of trees through the seasons. Older pupils designed and created moving 3D models using cardboard in science and mused whether colours really exist. Pupils of all ages participate fully and enthusiastically in all physical education (PE) activities and develop strong physical skills through the wide range of sporting activities available to them. Pupils in Year 8 sang heartily as they prepared for a performance of an Easter oratorio and talked appreciatively about the many opportunities to perform which they enjoy.
- 4.10 Older pupils demonstrate a good level of skill in information and communication technology (ICT) in some areas of the curriculum but its use across the curriculum does not feature highly in teachers' planning. Little use of ICT by pupils lower down the school and in the EYFS was observed. Year 7 pupils were able to download music confidently to accompany their own scripts in drama. Year 6 pupils researched their favourite scientist successfully online, using a variety of programmes to create a good standard of work. Younger pupils carried out searches to find information for software presentations competently in geography, although not all pupils understood the task sufficiently to be able to achieve the objective of the lesson. Pupils further develop their skills through extra-curricular activities

such as a computer club, even though the emphasis is on recreation rather than furthering pupils' competence and experience of programmes.

- 4.11 Overall, pupils develop effective study skills. However, pupils in the lower part of the school do not all demonstrate sufficiently advanced study skills for their age. Lack of opportunity to collaborate with peers and an over-dominance of written tasks mean that the development of study skills for younger pupils, especially those of lower ability, is less well developed. This is partly because the management of teaching by senior leaders does not enable or encourage staff to share good practice. Children in EYFS apply problem-solving and thinking skills to real life situations, as seen when the youngest pupils explained why they had selected the most appropriate materials for their excellent art work. Older pupils were able to think critically in science when debating whether everyone saw a different rainbow when looking through a raindrop from a different angle. They said how encouraging them to 'think outside the box' in English empowered them to contemplate issues and discuss meaning fully with their peers. More able pupils are able to analyse, hypothesise and synthesise. This was seen when they considered the effect of historical Chinese policy for families to have only one child and suggested better ways to curb population growth based on historical evidence.
- 4.12 Pupils achieve success in competitive entry examinations to local independent and maintained grammar schools with a few being awarded scholarships. They achieve a high level of success in a range of national and regional competitions such as those in debating and mathematics. All pupils participate enthusiastically and successfully in the wide range of sporting activities provided and show great pride when representing the school in competitive matches. Pupils have successfully represented the school at regional level in major team sports and individual sports such as skiing, cross-country and athletics, as well as in other activities such as essay writing. Pupils achieve commendable results in instrumental, dance, speech and drama examinations, encouraged and enabled by the specialist staff in the school's arts centre. They grow in confidence through regular participation in school plays, lunchtime concerts and performances in assembly. Senior staff ensure that all pupils' successes outside the classroom, whether as individuals or teams, are warmly celebrated by the whole school community. The busy programme of extra-curricular activities and house competitions instils great pride in pupils for their many achievements across the full range of school activities.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 4.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.
- 4.14 Pupils of all ages and abilities have particularly high levels of self-knowledge, self-discipline and resilience. As they progress through the school, they grow in self-esteem as they become aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. Children in the EYFS demonstrated perseverance as they carefully formed correct letter shapes, and older pupils showed great resilience when they had to revisit mistakes they had made in algebra more than once to end up with the right answer. Less able pupils appreciate the individual support from classroom assistants when it is given, and sensitive, focused teaching ensures that all pupils know what they are good at and where they need to improve. In discussion, pupils were confident and self-assured, open in sharing their feelings and attitudes. In many lessons, pupils thrive within the 'have a go' culture which empowers them to make mistakes in order to learn. This, coupled with the confidence gained through the many leadership roles they undertake, ensures that the majority of pupils feel well equipped for the next stage of their education. A small minority of pupils stated in the questionnaire that the school does not treat them fairly and listen to what they had to say but inspection evidence shows that the school listens to pupils' views through the school council but cannot always take action on what is asked for.
- 4.15 Pupils of all ages are extremely polite, respectful and courteous towards staff and their peers. In the questionnaire responses, most parents felt that the school actively promotes good behaviour and all pupils said the school expects them to behave well. Inspection evidence confirms this. Pupils are well

behaved, both in lessons and around school, and they accept responsibility for their own behaviour, including towards others. They show a keen sense of fair play. Children in the EYFS explained why they should have 'kind hands' so that nobody got hurt. They know there are consequences arising from the way they behave, and the need to make good choices is embedded at an early age. Pupils have a well-developed moral code which enables them to distinguish right from wrong and they take responsibility for their own behaviour. Older pupils show care and concern for pupils younger than themselves and take on responsibility successfully, such as in paired reading.

- 4.16 Pupils make sensible choices and have a clear understanding that the decisions they make will impact directly on their own success and well-being. Regular reinforcement and praise when good choices are made instils a confident, positive attitude to work and raises the pupils' self-esteem. Open-ended questioning by staff in the EYFS carefully guides and encourages children to think about the choices they make, such as choosing food at lunchtime, and what colours to choose when creating parrot pictures. Older pupils explained that making the wrong decision can be the first step in learning. They think seriously about decision-making in the world and understand the impact of their actions on others, as seen in a discussion about African history. Through the personal, social, and health education curriculum, pupils think about the impact of their actions on others.
- 4.17 Pupil's spiritual understanding is good and they show appropriate levels of understanding for the non-material aspects of life for their age. Children in the EYFS participate enthusiastically in activities based around festivals from other faiths, and the whole school appreciate themed lunches to celebrate events such as Diwali, understanding the significance of such festivals. Older pupils contemplate similarities and differences of comparative religions effectively, such as Buddhism, Judaism and Islam. They engage in active discussion and understand that important lessons can be learnt from stories of other faiths even if you are not of that faith yourself. Pupils are aware of the need for tolerance in a multi-faith society. They develop an appreciation of the non-material aspects of life through art, topic work and literature. Children in the EYFS reflected on the awe and wonder of the world as they explored the outdoor learning environment. Year 5 pupils reflected sensitively on the plight of the main characters in the novel 'The Whale Rider'.
- 4.18 Pupils develop a strong social awareness and almost all parents agreed in the questionnaire that the school helped their child to develop strong teamwork and social skills. Children in the EYFS acquire skills to work together and were seen to negotiate well in their playground activities. Older pupils thrive through the many opportunities provided for teamwork, problem-solving and collaboration outside of lessons across year groups, notably through the well-established house system. The whole-school Travel Week instils strong social bonds between pupils across all ages. Pupils appreciated how the school had made extra efforts to get them to work together after a long period of remote learning due to COVID-19. A small minority of pupils felt that all pupils are not always kind and respectful to each other and that the school does not teach them how to build positive relationships. Inspection evidence does not corroborate the view that the school does not teach pupils how to build positive relationships. The very few negative occurrences that occur due to misunderstanding racial difference are resolved amicably by the leadership, who make sure pupils learn lessons from any such incidents. Evidence does show that some pupils do not always demonstrate the kindness and respect shown by the vast majority.
- 4.19 Pupils develop strong leadership skills and contribute positively to the school community through performing a wide range of duties. Younger pupils thrive on class responsibilities, such as line leaders, peg monitors and cup collectors after snack time. The oldest pupils conscientiously perform the varied leadership duties they are given, such as class, house and sports captains. Those elected to the school council work effectively together to achieve common goals and all pupils feel positive about the school community. Pupils felt that opportunities to be librarians or work with pupils younger than them as reading and times-tables buddies make them more responsible and feel mature and proud. Pupils develop effective social responsibility through making practical contributions to improving the environment, for example by taking part in the local litter pick event. Shared use of facilities in the

school's arts centre enables pupils to establish fruitful links with others in the local community through participating in local music, speech and drama festivals. Pupils grow in self-esteem through opportunities to fulfil responsibilities and actively contribute to the lives of others. For example, they sing to the elderly throughout the year and join in events such as the local scarecrow trail. They participate fully in charity events, such as cake sales and sleepovers for a local hospice.

- 4.20 Pupils across the school show sensitivity, understanding and tolerance towards each other regardless of background, culture or ability. However, the school's aim to provide an excellent education within a caring community where all pupils are known and respected is not yet fully met. They show respect for the diversity and differing cultures within the school, and they feel they grow as individuals by learning about the heritage of their peers through special events such as culture days. Older pupils explained maturely how people such as Rosa Parks and Barack Obama had played a big part in stopping racism. Pupils feel that many staff provide excellent role models who always listen to both sides of any story and facilitate open discussion. They felt that promoting the view that everyone was a different-shaped piece in a jigsaw where every piece fitted is a strong message that the whole school understood. Inspection evidence shows that such strategies have created a well-knit pupil body.
- 4.21 Pupils of all ages know how to stay safe and keep healthy. The youngest children could explain why it is necessary to regularly wash their hands, drink lots of water and have a good night's sleep. Younger pupils are aware of the dangers in the car park and clearly explained the safest way to cross the road. They understand what constitutes a healthy diet and can describe which food groups need to be included. Older pupils are highly aware of the importance of keeping physically fit. They commented that they relish participating in the variety of sporting activities, both in school time and in clubs and greatly appreciate the impact on their well-being. Pupils of all ages can articulate clearly how to stay safe online. The senior leaders' investment in mental health first aiders is appreciated by pupils. They know there is always someone they can talk to in difficult times and their understanding of the needfulness of such support is secure.

5. Inspection Evidence

- 5.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the proprietor, chair of the advisory board, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Dr Wendy Bowring	Reporting inspector
Mr Bill Burn	Accompanying inspector
Mrs Helen Duffy	Compliance team inspector (Human resources director, HMC school)
Mrs Hilary Wyatt	Team inspector (Headmistress, ISA school)
Mrs Valerie Holloway	Co-ordinating inspector for early years (Former head of nursery and kindergarten, IAPS school)
Mrs Moyra Thompson	Team inspector for EYFS (Head, IAPS school)