



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Progress Monitoring Inspection Report

The Grove Independent School

January 2023

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	210			
	EYFS	86	Juniors (Years 1 to 6)	109
	Seniors (Years 7 and 8)	15		
Date of inspection	9 January 2023			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 The Grove Independent School is a co-educational preparatory day school in Milton Keynes. The sole proprietor is also the principal of the school. An advisory board supports the principal and assists in providing oversight. The school has an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) which includes a registered setting. The school has identified 11 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. There are two pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). The previous inspection was a focused compliance and educational quality inspection in February 2022.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.2 This was an unannounced progress monitoring inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following the regulatory compliance and educational quality inspection on 22 to 25 February 2022. The inspection focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs) and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework. It included inspection of additional areas following additional concerns which had been raised since the previous inspection.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding); EYFS 3.4 and 3.7	Not met
Part 3, paragraph 10 (bullying)	Not met
Part 3, paragraph 11 (health and safety); EYFS 3.55	Not met
Part 3, paragraph 12 (fire safety); EYFS 3.56	Met
Part 3, paragraph 13 (first aid); EYFS 3.51	Met
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision); EYFS 3.29 and 3.32	Met
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment); EYFS 3.65	Not met
Part 4, paragraphs 18 to 21 (recruitment of staff, supply staff and proprietors)	Met
Part 5, paragraph 23 (toilet and washing facilities)	Met
Part 5, paragraph 24 (medical facilities)	Met
Part 5, paragraph 25 (maintenance); EYFS 3.55 and 3.63	Not met
Part 5, paragraph 28 (water supply); EYFS 3.55	Met

Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information); EYFS 3.74	Met
Part 7, paragraph 33 (complaints); EYFS 3.75 and 3.76	Not met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management)	Not met
EYFS paragraph 3.21 (training and professional development)	Not met
EYFS paragraph 3.22 and 3.23 (supervision)	Met

2. Inspection findings

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7; EYFS 3.4 and 3.7]

Safeguarding policy

- 2.1 The school does not meet the requirements.
- 2.2 The school's policy for safeguarding does not outline suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school because in several respects it does not have regard to the latest statutory guidance in *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2022*. In particular, it does not state clearly that it follows the most recent statutory guidance and does not require that the role of the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is fulfilled separately from that of the sole proprietor, by a different person. It does not list the documents required to be a focus of staff induction training; clarify school policy on the use of mobile phones, including in the EYFS; state clearly that the school would contact the LADO prior to investigation when an allegation is made against an adult working in the school; clarify arrangements for handling any allegation against an adult with family connections to the proprietor.

Safeguarding implementation

- 2.3 The school does not meet the standard and the requirements.
- 2.4 The school implements suitable systems for listening to children. Pupils confirmed that they are confident to express any concerns that they have and that they would receive an appropriate response if they did so. There is an appropriate online safety policy and pupils showed that they are suitably educated about online risks. The school limits pupils' access to mobile phones effectively in practice, including in the EYFS, where general use of mobile phones is controlled effectively.
- 2.5 The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and two deputies have up-to-date, advanced training for their role and they carry out training for staff and provide regular updates. However, currently the DSL role is undertaken by the principal who is also the sole proprietor, contrary to the requirements of *KCSIE 2022*. The arrangement means that there is no suitable oversight of current safeguarding practice. There is a safeguarding member of the advisory group, who is also its chair, but the school could not provide evidence to show that this arrangement works in practice, nor evidence of an annual safeguarding review. The safeguarding policy states that the advisory board have been trained in safeguarding but no evidence was provided to confirm this.
- 2.6 It remains the case that safeguarding procedures are not well understood and effectively implemented by staff and senior leaders. Staff stated that they will report any concerns to the safeguarding team but lacked knowledge of the referral process for any allegations or low-level concerns against adults and for any concerns relating to the proprietor or a member of their family working in the school. The principal, senior leaders and staff were unclear of the nature of low-level concerns and how to record them. The school could not provide evidence that staff in the community centre that it operates, who are employed by the school, receive required safeguarding training.
- 2.7 The school has not effectively implemented the actions required following the previous inspection with regard to keeping comprehensive records of safeguarding and welfare issues. There is still no systematic and centralised recording system for welfare concerns about children. Consequently, monitoring of these concerns is ineffective.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – bullying [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 10]

- 2.8 The school does not meet the standard.
- 2.9 The school has not implemented the actions required as a result of the previous inspection effectively with regard to bullying. A new anti-bullying policy covers a greater number of aspects relating to bullying. The school has engaged with an external organisation to seek advice on training and on implementing an audit of bullying in the school. Staff demonstrate effective understanding of recent training in how to approach any incidents. Senior leaders have given assemblies for pupils and added new anti-bullying content into the curriculum. This indicates that some progress has been made.
- 2.10 However, record keeping of bullying incidents in the main school remains unsystematic and partial. There is still no centralised log which categorises the type of incident, records interviews with pupils and states actions taken to implement sanctions and support for all pupils involved. This prevents any overview of the extent of bullying being formed or the possibility of identifying any emerging patterns of bullying behaviours.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – health and safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 11; EYFS 3.55]

- 2.11 The school does not meet the standard and the requirements.
- 2.12 The school has not effectively implemented all the actions required as a result of the previous inspection with regard to health and safety. The health and safety policy does not reflect current practice as it has not been updated since the previous inspection and some arrangements for implementing health and safety matters have changed. The school has now appointed a site manager and is implementing suitable plans to use an external health and safety provider to monitor health and safety arrangements in the school. These plans are not yet fully realised. Damaged areas of the roof in the EYFS and in the medical room have now been suitably repaired.
- 2.13 However, some areas of ineffective health and safety practice remain around the site. The science room is not locked during the day and the gas cut-off tap in this room is not suitably located. In some rooms, including those in the EYFS, there is an accumulation of clutter which is not effectively stored. Record-keeping of health and safety checks and other related documentation remain ineffective. There is no centralised system of recording which prevents key staff from accessing documents effectively. Monitoring of the effectiveness of health and safety by senior leaders is therefore not yet sufficiently rigorous and proactive.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – fire safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 12; EYFS 3.56]

- 2.14 The school meets the standard and the requirements.
- 2.15 The school has effectively implemented the actions required with regard to fire safety. A suitable fire risk assessment has been carried out by a qualified external provider and appropriate actions are being taken to address their recommendations. All flammable materials are now safely stored.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – first aid [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 13; EYFS 3.51]

- 2.16 The school meets the standard and the requirements.
- 2.17 The school has effectively implemented the actions required as a result of the previous inspection with regard to first aid. First aid boxes and bags are now regularly checked and re-stocked as

necessary. They are available in suitable locations around the school. First aid is administered in a timely and competent manner.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – supervision of pupils [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 14; EYFS 3.29 and 3.32]

- 2.18 The school meets the standard and the requirements.
- 2.19 The school has effectively implemented the actions required as a result of the previous inspection with regard to supervision. There is now a suitable supervision policy. In the EYFS, ratios for supervision of children were observed as being adhered to, including with regard to required ratios for different ages. Supervision in the EYFS is monitored daily by the head of nursery and the principal. There is a list of additional, qualified staff to call upon in the case of absence. Supervision by staff around the school during break and lunchtime was seen to be effective and staff exercise due vigilance.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16; EYFS 3.65]

- 2.20 The school does not meet the standard and the requirements.
- 2.21 The actions required as a result of the previous inspection with regard to risk assessment are not effectively implemented. There is now an adequate risk assessment policy, the implementation of which is monitored by senior staff. Staff confirm that they write risk assessments for any trips they undertake and that these are reviewed by a senior leader. There are some suitable risk assessments for areas of the site and activities. There are also areas where risk has not been adequately assessed, such as with regard to the gas supply in the science room. In the EYFS, daily assessment of risks is not effective and, as a result, there were some areas of the setting where inspection evidence demonstrated risks to children which had not been identified. Recordkeeping is not rigorous enough to ensure effective access to required information. A systematic approach to identifying risks and to mitigating them across the school is not yet evident.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18–21]

- 2.22 The school meets the standards.
- 2.23 The school carries out all necessary recruitment checks, including Disclosure and Barring Service checks and checks against the barred list, before appointment. It maintains a suitable record of checks.

Premises and accommodation – toilets and washing facilities and medical facilities [ISSR Part 5, paragraphs 23 and 24; EYFS 3.55]

- 2.24 The school meets the standards and the requirements.
- 2.25 Suitable toilet and washing facilities are now provided for the sole use of pupils. Signage for them is appropriate. Changing accommodation and showers are provided for pupils of aged 11 years or over who receive physical education. Suitable medical accommodation is provided. The water damage to the roof of the medical centre has now been repaired.

Premises and accommodation – maintenance [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 25; EYFS 3.55 and 3.63]

- 2.26 The school does not meet the standards and the requirements.
- 2.27 A comprehensive survey of site maintenance was completed by an external provider in June 2022 and a programme of repairs was carried out in response to it. Within the EYFS, buildings are now secure so that unauthorised access is prevented. The site manager has prioritised the most significant concerns highlighted in the survey and dealt with them appropriately. However, maintenance of the indoor and outdoor areas of the EYFS is insufficiently effective. Bird droppings which may provide a hazard to children are not removed from the outside area sufficiently quickly; wheeled toys are not stored safely; and inadequate organisation of resources indoors results in unnecessary and potentially hazardous clutter.

Premises and accommodation – water supply [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 28; EYFS 3.55]

- 2.28 The school meets the standards and the requirements.
- 2.29 Suitable drinking water facilities are provided for use by pupils and they are correctly labelled. All toilet facilities now have an adequate supply of cold water and washing facilities have an adequate supply of warm and cold water. A suitable legionella risk assessment has been carried out by an external provider and the school is carrying out regular checks of water temperature.

Provision of information [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c); EYFS 3.74]

- 2.30 The school meets the requirements for providing information relating to safeguarding to parents. Particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding are published on the school's website. All required information is now provided to parents regarding the operation of the EYFS.

Manner in which complaints are handled [ISSR Part 7, paragraph 33; EYFS 3.75 and 3.76]

- 2.31 The school does not meet the standard and the requirements.
- 2.32 The school has not implemented all the actions required as a result of the previous inspection with regard to complaints. Senior leaders still do not maintain an appropriate complaints log. This makes it impossible to tell whether all complaints are being recorded and responded to in a suitable way.
- 2.33 With reference to the EYFS, the school has effectively updated its complaints policy to include a statement that any complaint about the EYFS setting has to be reported to Ofsted within 28 days of the receipt of the complaint.

Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34; EYFS 3.21 to 3.23]

- 2.34 The school does not meet the standard and all of the requirements.
- 2.35 The school has not successfully met all of the actions required by the previous inspection. Its action plan has not been fully implemented. Although the proprietor has created a new senior leadership team, the school's leaders do not demonstrate sufficient skills and knowledge to ensure that the independent school standards are consistently met and that they actively promote the wellbeing of pupils. Proprietorial oversight is not sufficiently rigorous in several areas.
- 2.36 In the EYFS, the school has not effectively implemented the required actions with regard to training and professional development. Professional development is not a clearly planned part of staff

development and there has not been purposeful training, or visits to other settings, to improve the learning and development experiences for children and therefore their outcomes.

- 2.37 In the EYFS the school has effectively implemented the actions required with regard to supervisions. Supervision meetings are now carried out regularly with purpose and with due regard to practitioners' professional development.

3. Regulatory action points

- 3.1 The school does not meet all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.

ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety, paragraph 7

- The school must ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by drawing up a policy that has full regard to *Keeping Children Safe in Education* and other statutory guidance, in particular by including the following: state clearly that it follows the most recent statutory guidance; require that the role of the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is fulfilled separately from that of the sole proprietor by a different person; list the documents required to be a focus of staff induction training; clarify school policy on the use of mobile phones, including in the EYFS; state clearly that the school would contact the LADO prior to investigation when an allegation is made against an adult working in the school; state arrangements for handling any allegation against an adult with family connections to the proprietor [paragraph 7(a) and (b); EYFS 3.4 and 3.7].
- The school must implement its safeguarding policy effectively, including in all the areas identified at the previous inspection and in particular, keep and monitor comprehensive and clear records of all safeguarding and welfare issues; ensure and record suitable safeguarding training for staff employed at the school's linked community centre; ensure all staff, including those with designated safeguarding responsibilities, understand fully and implement arrangements to record low-level concerns about adults working in the school [paragraph 7(a) and (b); EYFS 3.4 and 3.7].
- The school must ensure effective and thorough proprietorial oversight of safeguarding, in particular with regard to holding and recording an annual review of safeguarding, and ensuring that all current deficiencies in the school's safeguarding arrangements are remedied [paragraph 7(a) and (b); EYFS 3.4 and 3.7]

ISSR Part 3, welfare, health and safety, paragraph 10

- The school must ensure that bullying in the school is prevented as far as reasonably practicable by keeping a comprehensive, centralised record of all potential bullying incidents, monitoring this and identifying any trends evident from the record [paragraph 10].

ISSR Part 3, welfare, health and safety, paragraph 11

- The school must ensure that the health and safety policy reflects current practice and is rigorously implemented so that procedures identify and address concerns promptly, in particular with regard to control of gas supply in the science room; keeping classrooms free from clutter; maintaining careful records; and ensuring that rigorous and proactive oversight pervades all health and safety matters [paragraph 11; EYFS 3.55].

ISSR Part 3, welfare, health and safety, paragraph 16

- The school must implement its written risk assessment policy effectively by identifying risks promptly and ensuring appropriate action is taken to reduce them; in particular it must ensure that risk from the gas supply in the science room is adequately assessed and suitable action taken to mitigate any risks identified; and that daily assessments of risk in the EYFS are comprehensive both indoors and outdoors [paragraph 16(a) and (b); EYFS 3.65].

ISSR Part 5, maintenance, paragraph 25

- The school must ensure effective maintenance of all areas, in particular, the indoor and outdoor areas of the EYFS: by removing bird droppings sufficiently quickly; ensuring wheeled toys are stored safely; and organising resources indoors to remove unnecessary and potentially hazardous clutter [paragraph 25; EYFS 3.55 and 3.63].

ISSR Part 7, complaints, paragraph 33

- 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 and 3.76].

ISSR Part 8, leadership and management, paragraph 34

- 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 they actively promote the well-being of the pupils. In particular, the school must ensure appropriate arrangements are made for professional development and training of staff in the EYFS [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c); EYFS 3.21].

4. Summary of evidence

4.1 The inspectors held discussions with the principal, who is also the proprietor, senior leaders and other members of staff, including staff in the registered EYFS setting. They visited different areas of the school and talked with groups of pupils. They scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.

Inspectors

Mrs Kate McCarey	Reporting inspector
Mrs Vivien Sergeant	Assistant reporting inspector
Mrs Angela Russell	Co-ordinating inspector for early years