

School report

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Gracefield Preparatory School

266 Overdale Road, Bristol, BS16 2RG

Inspection dates

19–21 March 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have high expectations of staff and pupils. The culture of the school is aspirational, pupils achieve well and all of the independent school standards are met.
- Pupils behave well. They are polite, kind and respectful towards each other. They exhibit positive attitudes to learning in class.
- Provision for children in the early years is good. They achieve well because they are well taught.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stages of their education by the time they leave the school.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school. Staff work closely with parents to involve them in pupils' learning. Communication between home and school is excellent.
- Pupils across the school do not have enough opportunities yet to practise problem solving and develop reasoning in mathematics.
- Pupils benefit from a rich curriculum. Extra-curricular opportunities complement their study of different academic subjects.
- Pupils' attendance is good and above the state-school national average.
- Teachers apply their subject knowledge well to plan interesting and effective lessons. Pupils make good progress as a result.
- Staff provide pupils with a high level of pastoral care and academic support.
- The most able pupils do not receive enough work that is sufficiently challenging.
- Tasks in foundation subjects sometimes do not demand as much of pupils as reading, writing and mathematics tasks.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement further by ensuring that:
 - teachers across the school plan activities that challenge the most able pupils to think more deeply
 - pupils are provided with more opportunities to practise problem solving and develop their reasoning skills in mathematics
 - activities in foundation subjects make similarly high demands of pupils as activities in English and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the previous inspection, senior leadership has developed and expanded, which has created greater capacity. Consequently, leaders have been able to strengthen different areas of the school's work.
- Leaders are reflective about their work and receptive to advice. This approach has enabled them to identify areas for improvement and prioritise their actions. A newly appointed senior leader brings helpful experience from the state school sector. This 'external' perspective is helping leaders and staff to stay abreast of current educational developments.
- Leaders and the wider staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and what they can achieve. In return, pupils are keen to impress and please their teachers. They take pride in their appearance and the work they produce.
- Staff have cultivated a welcoming, inclusive school culture where all pupils are valued. Staff lead by example and encourage pupils to be kind, respectful and accepting of each other, regardless of differences.
- Pupils experience a rich, diverse curriculum. Pupils who spoke with the lead inspector said that they were provided with ample opportunities to study the full range of subjects. Leaders give equal priority to art, music and languages, as well as core academic subjects such as English, mathematics and science. In addition, pupils benefit from frequent trips, visits and in-school activities that complement their subject study.
- Pupils enjoy a comprehensive range of extra-curricular activities, which is notable given the small size of the school. Pupils are encouraged to participate in a mix of clubs that both stimulate their creativity and provide them with physical exercise. Clubs include arts and crafts, 'Sticky Fingers' (baking) and tennis.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school. They value the strong communication between home and school that enables them to be fully involved in their child's school experience. All parents who responded to the Parent View survey would recommend the school. Leaders have worked hard, and successfully, to nurture these strong relationships with parents.
- Staff feel well supported because of the close-knit nature of the team, including senior leaders. They know and trust each other, and this underpins their collegiate approach to planning together and sharing practice. All staff who responded to the staff survey issued during the inspection agreed that they are proud to be members of staff at the school. They also agreed that leaders do all they can to ensure the school has a motivated, respected and effective teaching staff.
- Leaders also ensure that staff are held to account for the progress of their pupils. Although staff talk favourably about the supportive 'family atmosphere' that exists in the school, they also feel challenged in their work. Leaders have strengthened the performance management system so that it is now more rigorous. Staff report that the targets they are set are meaningful and relevant. Leaders have not been afraid to tackle underperformance when it has arisen.

- Pupils across the school have a very good understanding of British values. This is because the curriculum provides them with different opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) understanding. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 were able to tell the lead inspector about democracy and the rule of law. They articulated well-reasoned arguments when asked the question, 'Are laws a good idea?'
- Leaders' mission to ensure pupils develop into well-rounded young people is spearheaded by their approach to SMSC. Staff champion the diverse nature of pupils' cultural and ethnic backgrounds. They look for ways to explore and celebrate differences. For example, displays around the school are currently teaching pupils about the Easter story and what happens at a Sikh wedding.
- Each of the independent school standards has been met. Leaders have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and obligations regarding the standards.

Governance

- The proprietors consist of the headteacher and her husband. They are experienced proprietors and understand the importance of ensuring that the school meets the independent school standards. To that end, the proprietors have worked closely with senior leaders to ensure that the school is still compliant in every respect.
- The proprietors set the tone and vision for the school. The headteacher has high expectations of senior leaders, the wider staff and pupils. She has a good understanding of the local context and the place of Gracefield within it. As such, the proprietors have been able to steer the school on a steady course and ensure that the school continues to thrive.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The designated safeguarding lead has a confident and detailed oversight of all child-protection matters and procedures. She ensures that all staff are appropriately trained and know what to do should they need to make a referral about a child. Staff communicate frequently to discuss any safeguarding issues and where necessary, take the right action.
- The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website and meets current requirements.
- Checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils are up to date and comprehensive. Leaders responsible for appointing new staff to the school have been trained in safer recruitment and apply this effectively.
- Pupils feel safe in school. This is because there are staff they would speak to if they had any concerns and because there is very little bullying. Pupils feel that staff look after them well. Pupils who spoke with the lead inspector also talked about the protective 'family feel' of the school. All parents who responded to Parent View agree that pupils are safe in the school.

- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe online. They know not to share private details with strangers online, reveal passwords or upload pictures which might indicate their location.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils benefit from very positive relationships with staff. Staff encourage pupils to contribute to class discussion, to share their views and develop confidence in doing so. Consequently, classrooms are 'safe' spaces where it is acceptable for pupils to 'have a go' and make mistakes. One pupil who spoke with the lead inspector said, 'They [staff] help us when we find things hard.'
- Teachers use their subject knowledge effectively to plan interesting activities that are pitched appropriately to most pupils' needs. This secures pupils' interest and ensures that they enjoy their learning.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good because staff have high expectations of their behaviour and commitment to work. Teachers have established good habits and routines for learning in pupils. As a result, pupils are always prompt to lessons, well equipped and ready to learn.
- Reading has a high profile in the school. Pupils practise their reading daily and are supported in different ways to make progress in their reading. For example, staff enable pupils to take advantage of the well-stocked library. Books are arranged in such a way that pupils can easily access the most appropriate books for them. Furthermore, parents are highly involved in supporting pupils' reading at home.
- Pupils benefit from a comprehensive homework programme. They receive regular homework that is focused primarily on the development of reading, spelling and mathematical skills. Teachers provide frequent and timely feedback that helps reinforce pupils' understanding. As with reading, parents provide valuable support with homework.
- Staff monitor pupils' progress closely, using the school's assessment system. Teachers frequently assess the extent to which pupils have acquired knowledge and skills following lessons. These assessments inform future planning and teaching. They enable staff to identify areas of underperformance for individual pupils. In turn, staff then put support in place to help pupils catch up when they fall behind.
- The most able pupils are not provided with enough work that is sufficiently challenging and deepens their thinking.
- Leaders acknowledge that pupils across the school, until recently, have not been provided with enough opportunities to practise problem solving and develop their reasoning skills in mathematics. Staff now provide more opportunities, but this work is recent.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils receive a high level of care and attention. Staff have a good understanding of pupils' needs, interests and backgrounds. They ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive appropriate support, whether it is academic or pastoral.
- Pupils across the school have a good understanding of mental health. This is because leaders have raised its profile in the school. Staff explicitly teach pupils about the importance of looking after their mental health by sharing their worries and not 'bottling things up'.
- Pupils become confident and self-assured as they move up through the school. In part this is because of the curriculum that develops independence, team work and use of initiative. It is also because pupils are encouraged to take on responsibility roles, such as school councillor and library monitor.
- Staff ensure that pupils learn about, maintain and improve their physical health. For example, all pupils take part in the daily 'Wake and Shake', which encourages them to exercise before they begin learning.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are courteous and proud of their school. Throughout the inspection, pupils of different ages greeted inspectors cheerfully and held doors open for adults. Pupils generally wear their uniform correctly and with pride.
- Pupils move around the school in an orderly and sensible way. This is particularly important given the internal layout of the building, which is a converted three-story Victorian house. In some areas there is not much space, so pupils make a conscious effort to respect each other's personal space and move sensibly.
- Pupils' attendance is good because they enjoy coming to school and value their school experience. Attendance is well above the national average for state primary schools.
- Staff apply the school's behaviour policy consistently. This ensures that pupils know what the boundaries are for acceptable behaviour. Staff praise and reward pupils' achievements and, when things go wrong, take a restorative approach to repairing relationships. Pupils report that the behaviour of their peers is good.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- By the time pupils leave the school, they achieve standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are comparable with other pupils nationally. Pupils acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to make good progress in a range of subjects at secondary school.
- Pupils' books show that they take great pride in the quality and presentation of their work. Pupils of different abilities are keen to improve their work and make it the best it can be. Consequently, they take careful note of teachers' feedback and act on it.

- Pupils with SEND make good progress, sometimes better than their peers, because of the bespoke provision they receive. Staff work well with external agencies to secure extra support, resources and training for the benefit of pupils.
- The assessment system ensures that staff have a good understanding of the progress made by all pupils. Leaders analyse the differences in achievement between pupils from different ethnic groups. They ensure, during regular pupil progress meetings, that support is put in place to help pupils catch up. Consequently, pupils from different backgrounds make comparable, good progress.
- The rigorous curriculum in reading, writing and mathematics ensures that pupils develop key skills. They develop proficiency in writing for different purposes and audiences, use spelling, punctuation and grammar correctly and apply calculation skills. However, work shows that pupils have not yet been given enough opportunities to become adept at problem-solving and reasoning in mathematics.
- The curricular rigour evident in reading, writing and mathematics is not as evident in other subjects. Although the topics studied by pupils in foundation subjects are stimulating and capture their interest, tasks are sometimes not as demanding as those in core subjects. Some tasks do not require pupils to think as deeply as they should.

Early years provision

Good

- The quality of teaching in the early years is good. Staff in the Reception class understand children's abilities and use their expertise to plan activities that are well matched to the needs of the children. Leaders provide staff with tailored professional development that ensures that their skills are continually updated and meet the needs of children. Consequently, teachers and teaching assistants work well together to share expertise and plan effective provision for children.
- Staff make the best use of indoor and outside space. They have created a fun, colourful learning environment that captures children's imagination and supports the teaching. For example, one corner of the room has been adapted to resemble 'outer space', in keeping with the topic children are learning about. It features stars, planets and pictures of astronauts that bring the topic to life. However, outside space is limited and often necessitates repeated unpacking and packing away of equipment. Nevertheless, the outside area enables children to take advantage of different outside activities, such as using the mud kitchen, which enhances their learning experience.
- Staff use accurate ongoing assessment to monitor children's progress and inform teaching. Where children are not making enough progress towards meeting the early learning goals, staff use assessment information to adapt teaching and provision. Further support that is effective is provided for children with SEND.
- Children are kept safe because staff are appropriately trained. Staff follow the same safeguarding procedures that apply throughout the rest of the school. The early years environment is secure and appropriate staff supervision ensures that children are well looked after.
- Over time, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has been below the national average. However, achievement has continued to rise during this period. The proportion of current children expected to achieve a good level of

development is set to be at least in line with the national average. This is because staff have ensured that appropriate provision is in place to enable children to meet the early learning goals.

School details

Unique reference number	109343
DfE registration number	801/6009
Inspection number	10056302

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other Independent School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	68
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Morgan Education Ltd.
Headteacher	Elizabeth Morgan
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,652
Telephone number	01179567977
Website	http://www.gracefieldschool.co.uk/
Email address	enquiries@gracefieldschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–14 January 2016

Information about this school

- Gracefield is an independent primary school for girls and boys aged from four to 11 years.
- Situated in Fishponds in the east of the city of Bristol, the school occupies a detached Victorian house.
- The school opened in 1950 and is registered for 112 pupils.
- The last standard inspection of the school took place in January 2016. At this time, the school was judged to be good.
- No pupils attend part time.
- The proprietor has responsibility for governance of the school.

- The school is currently organised into seven classes, one for each year group.
- The school has identified 19 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning and behaviour in lessons jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, staff and pupils. Inspectors also spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation. This included the school's self-evaluation, progress information, curriculum documents, policies, attendance and behaviour records and information relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and observed pupils' conduct around the school, during assembly and at breaktimes.
- The lead inspector took account of 57 responses to the online Parent View survey and free-text comments. He also took account of 66 responses to the pupil survey and 10 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Steve Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Martin Bragg

Ofsted Inspector

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