

THE GROVE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

Redland Drive, Loughton, Milton Keynes, MK5 8HD

9TH DECEMBER 2016

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Grove Independent School is a co-educational day school for pupils between the ages of three months to thirteen years. The school was founded in 1984, and has occupied a single site with purpose-built facilities in central Milton Keynes since 1989. The school is both owned and led by its principal, who is supported by an advisory board of governors. The school has three sections; the Nursery for children up to three years; a Foundation department for ages four to seven and a Prep department for ages seven to thirteen.

At the time of the visit, there were 275 pupils on roll: 142 boys and 133 girls. Ninety of these are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Sixteen pupils require and receive support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They require support with a variety of needs, including dyslexia and physical impairment. Two have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. No pupils require support for English as an additional language.

The previous ISI integrated inspection was in June 2014.

PURPOSE OF THE VISIT

This was an unannounced visit at the request of the Department for Education which is focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs) and the Early Years Statutory Framework 2014, particularly those concerned with teaching; safeguarding; behaviour; prevention of bullying; health and safety; fire safety; first aid; supervision; risk assessment; recruitment; premises and accommodation; leadership and management.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

Quality of education provided – Teaching [Part 1, paragraph 3 (g)]

The school meets the regulation.

Teaching is suitably planned and enables pupils to make good progress. The school has an on-line tracking system in place which enables teachers to plan effectively for the needs of all pupils and leaders to monitor their progress. This assessment process allows the school to identify and support those pupils with SEND; this is overseen by a suitably-qualified special needs co-ordinator. Although there are currently no pupils requiring support for EAL, there are suitably trained and experienced staff available in case of need.

Interviews with teaching staff indicate they are aware of the needs of pupils with SEND and plan work appropriate to their needs. This was supported by a scrutiny of teachers' planning and samples of pupils' work. The school is generally successful in gaining places for its pupils to local senior schools, at both ages 11 and 13.

Welfare, health and safety – safeguarding [Part 3, paragraph 7 (a) and (b) and EYFS 3.4 – 3.18]

The school does not meet the regulation and requirements.

Staff receive training in child protection, including on induction, but do not show a secure understanding of the training which they have received. The safeguarding policy made available to parents and inspectors at the time of the inspection, dated October 2016, which replaced another document in use immediately prior to the visit, does not meet current requirements. Types of abuse listed within the policy are not in line with current requirements, including the potential dangers of peer abuse. The policy recognises the vulnerability of children with SEND. The policy does not guide staff how to respond to both children at risk and in need.

Staff are aware of how to report safeguarding concerns. The school liaises appropriately with children's services, and has sought help from outside agencies when required, such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The school has suitable internet filtering and strict rules regarding the staff use of mobile phones. The designated senior leaders (DSLs) have received recent training in their role. Pupils are taught how to stay safe on-line.

Staff do not have a secure understanding of the recent training provided for both new and existing staff, including the recent changes introduced in *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (September 2016). In interviews, staff were unclear about such elements as the dangers of peer abuse and the different approaches required towards pupils in need and at risk. Records relating to attendance at safeguarding training and induction sessions were incomplete.

The school does not have sufficiently secure recruitment processes to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children. References have either not been obtained or retained for a small minority of staff before they start work. Checks against the lists held by the Disqualification and Barring Service (DBS) and for overseas criminal records could not be evidenced. The school was not aware of the introduction of either form of prohibition check on new staff. In addition, although the school's policy states that this is required, its records show that not all staff have made a declaration concerning their suitability to work with younger pupils.

Welfare, health and safety – promoting good behaviour [Part 3, paragraph 9, EYFS 3.52]

The school does not meet the regulation and requirement.

The school has a suitable system of rewards and sanctions. However, it is not always implemented effectively. The school has recently introduced a new system to record sanctions. In the recent past, the school has not always recorded serious sanctions clearly, including details of the exclusion of pupils. The school's pupil restraint policy states that staff should be trained in physical intervention with pupils if this is required. In interviews, staff indicated that they were not aware of having received training, and do not record such instances, even though these had taken place. Pupils feel many staff use rewards and sanctions consistently. However, they also reported that a small number of staff use these unfairly.

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

The school meets the regulation.

Both pupils, staff and school records confirm that bullying is rare, and the school takes such incidents seriously, addressing the causes and providing support for those involved. The recognition and prevention of bullying, including potential risks on-line, are suitably addressed in personal, social and health education lessons, and through the information and communication technology (ICT) curriculum.

Welfare, health and safety – health and safety, fire, first aid, supervision and risk assessments [Part 3, paragraphs 11, 12, 13, 14 and 16 and EYFS 3.28 – 3.39; 3.44 – 3.46 and 3.50 – 3.55, 3.64 - 3.67]

The school meets the regulations and requirements.

The school has adequate health and safety, fire prevention, first-aid, supervision and risk assessment arrangements in place. Responsibilities for these areas are clear. Plant and equipment is tested and serviced at regular intervals. Suitable health and safety records are maintained. There is currently building work on site, adjacent to the school buildings. At the time of the visit, this was suitably fenced off. Pupils were clear that this area was out of bounds, and staff on duty were suitably positioned to supervise pupils.

The school has an adequate fire policy and risk assessment. Fire evacuation practices are held each term. Pupils with mobility issues confirm that the school has suitable procedures to help them during fire practices.

Medical and first-aid procedures meet requirements. Pupils' medical information is readily available to relevant staff through the school's on-line information system. There are clear protocols concerning the notification of infectious diseases.

Staff are suitably deployed to supervise pupils, and senior staff show a secure understanding of the required ratios for younger pupils. Risk assessments are in place for all areas of the site. The school has suitable procedures for trips and outings. Staff complete a detailed form, including a risk assessment. This information, along with any relevant medical details for participants, is made available to staff accompanying these trips.

Suitability of staff [Part 4, paragraphs 18 and 21 and EYFS 3.9 – 3.18]

The school does not meet the regulations and requirements.

The school does not make appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff and the register of staff appointments is not kept as required. The school's recruitment procedures do not ensure the required checks against the records held by the DBS, overseas criminal records, lists for prohibition from teaching and management, qualifications and medical suitability are made in a timely fashion. The single central record for staff recruitment contains numerous omissions, for example, DBS checks were recorded as having been applied for but no confirmation was given of the result.

Premises and accommodation – maintenance [Part 5, paragraph 25]

The school meets the regulation.

The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with the health and safety of pupils, staff and visitors. Measures for site security and the control of visitors are suitable, and include CCTV cameras. Buildings are modern, and have suitable locks on the windows. These are checked by staff at the end of each day. The Nursery has suitably controlled access.

Provision of information to parents [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32 (1) (c)].

The school meets the regulation.

The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

The quality of leadership and management [Part 8, paragraph 34]

The school does not meet the regulation.

The proprietor, leadership and management do not demonstrate good skills and knowledge or fulfil their responsibilities with sufficient effectiveness to actively promote the well-being of the pupils. The weaknesses in

staff training and the absence of required recruitment checks, alongside the other regulatory issues outlined above, indicate that the school does not fulfil all of its responsibilities to ensure the safety and well-being of its pupils.

The school has previously been compliant with regulations. The proprietor has recently appointed an advisory body to provide support in carrying out these roles. Notwithstanding the issues identified, the school has the capacity to improve if the issues highlighted in this report are addressed.

REGULATORY ACTION POINTS

The school does not meet all of the relevant requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and the Early Years Statutory Framework 2014.

Welfare, health and safety – safeguarding [Part 3, paragraph 7 (a) and (b) and EYFS 3.4 – 3.18]

- The school must ensure that its safeguarding policy is updated to reflect current requirements, as found in *Keeping Children Safe in Education, September 2016*.
- Ensure that all staff receive updated safeguarding training and that all have read and understood the most recent update of Part 1 of *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, including *Annex A*.
- Ensure that all necessary checks are carried out on staff to ensure their suitability to work with children. In addition, ensure that all relevant staff make a declaration that their home background does not disqualify them from working with young children.

Welfare, health and safety – promoting good behaviour [Part 3, paragraph 9 and EYFS 3.52]

- Maintain detailed and accurate records of the use of physical intervention with pupils, including those children in the EYFS, and that such incidents are reported to parents.
- Provide all staff with suitable training on physical intervention, if required.
- Ensure that all staff apply the school's rewards and sanctions policy in a fair and consistent manner.

Suitability of staff [Part 4, paragraphs 18 and 21 and EYFS 3.9 – 3.18]

- The school must ensure that all appropriate checks are undertaken prior to undertaking their duties and these are recorded accurately on the single central register of appointments. These include checks for criminal background, prohibitions from teaching and management, references, qualifications and medical suitability.

The quality of leadership and management [Part 8, paragraph 34 (c)]

- The proprietor must ensure that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.