



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION REPORT

THE GROVE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

APRIL 2018



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SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	The Grove Independent School			
DfE number	826/6002			
Address	Redland Drive Loughton 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	270			
	Boys	130	Girls	140
	EYFS	125	Juniors (Y1 to Y6)	135
	Seniors (Y7 and Y8)	10		
Inspection dates	25 to 26 April 2018			

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 The Grove Independent School is a co-educational preparatory day school educating pupils from the age of 3 months through to 13 years. 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 her proprietorial oversight.
- 1.2 Since the previous full inspection in 2014, the school has almost completed a new building for art and technology, a performance and library space, two classrooms, and new changing rooms and showers.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 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

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of professional and business backgrounds, reflecting the broad ethnic mix of the local area, living within Milton Keynes and the nearby towns. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average. The school has identified fourteen pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) which include dyslexia and other learning needs, two of whom receive additional specialist help. Two pupils have education, health and care plans to support their physical needs. A significant minority of pupils come from families where other languages are spoken. These pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), but most are bilingual and none require specialist help for their English. A scholars' club provides additional extension and challenge for a small number of pupils with particular talent in academic work, sport, music and art.

2. REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION

Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. The inspection of schools that have early years settings not requiring registration similarly records whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, the inspection reports 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. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a COMPLIANCE ONLY inspection and as such 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 full regulations 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, and associated requirements, and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 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 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

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

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.7 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; attendance registers are maintained, as required, and a disability access plan is in place.
- 2.8 The school does not have a sufficiently robust and efficient system to record and monitor any alleged acts of unkindness or bullying and does not therefore have sufficient information to take action promptly when needed. This judgement was supported by a significant minority of pupils' and a few parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires.
- 2.9 The school maintains a correct admission register, but it has failed to notify the local authority when pupils are removed from or added to it at non-standard times.
- 2.10 The school does not have a strategic approach to risk assessment that enables it to respond to and manage all relevant physical and welfare risks, so as to achieve a consistently safe environment and safe working practices.
- 2.11 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety in paragraphs 7, 9, 11, 12, 13 and 14, the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met, but those in paragraph 10 (the prevention of bullying), paragraph 15 (admission register) and paragraph 16 (risk assessment) are not met.**

Action point 1

- The school must ensure that bullying is prevented in so far as reasonably practicable, by developing more rigorous systems of reporting, recording and monitoring alleged incidents [Part 3, paragraph 10].

Action point 2

- The school must ensure that it informs the local authority when pupils are removed from or added to its admission register at non-standard times [Part 3, paragraph 15].

Action point 3

- The school must ensure that a strategic and comprehensive approach to risk assessment ensures prompt identification and resolution of hazards and risks [Part 3, paragraph 16].

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

- 2.12 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors and a register is kept as required.
- 2.13 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

- 2.14 Suitable toilet, changing and showering facilities for pupils and appropriate accommodation for their medical and therapy needs are provided. Acoustics and lighting are appropriate, and water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.
- 2.15 In most respects, the premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety, but some inadequate security arrangements were notified to the school.
- 2.16 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation in paragraphs 23, 24 and 26-29 are met but those in paragraph 25 (maintenance) are not met.**

Action point 4

- **The school must ensure that security arrangements are properly assessed and managed to ensure that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils is ensured [Part 5, paragraph 25].**

PART 6 – Provision of information

- 2.17 A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. These include 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 those with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. They also include inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.
- 2.18 Although particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year are made available to parents of prospective pupils, this information is not made available to parents of current pupils.
- 2.19 The standards relating to the provision of information in paragraphs 32(1)(a), 32(1)(c), 32(1)(d) and 32(1)(f)-(i), 32(2), 32(3)(a)-(d) and 32(3)(f) and (g) are met but those in paragraphs 32(1)(b) and 32(3)(e) are not met.**

Action point 5

- **The school must ensure that particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year are made available to parents of current pupils and that such parents are made aware that they can request this information [Part 6, paragraphs 32(1)(b) and 32(3)(c)].**

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.20 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively 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. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.
- 2.21 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.**

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 2.22 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management actively promote the welfare and well-being of pupils.
- 2.23 The proprietor has not ensured that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, to ensure that regulations and standards are consistently met. In particular, policies and other documents and records are not updated regularly enough to ensure efficient monitoring and oversight of the school's routines and practices.
- 2.24 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school in paragraph 34(1)(c) is met but those in paragraphs 34(1)(a) and (b) (knowledge and skills and fulfilment of responsibilities) are not met.**

Action point 6

- **The school must ensure that leaders and managers demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, in order to ensure that regulations and standards are consistently met [Part 8, paragraphs 34(1)(a) and (b)].**

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

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

- 2.25 The overall effectiveness of the early years provision ('the setting') is good.
- 2.26 Staff ensure that all children, including those with SEND or EAL, make good progress in relation to their starting points. The provision meets the needs of all the children and provides a good quality learning environment in which children thrive and enjoy their learning. Staff respond to the individual needs and particular interests of children, and this is central to the planning of suitable experiences which promote engagement and enjoyment. Children reach the expected levels of development for their age. These very young children feel happy, safe and secure in the Nursery environment. Their personal, social and emotional development are good, and progress in all the areas of learning is planned for in a way that reflects a good knowledge of how babies and young children develop.
- 2.27 The requirements for children's safeguarding and welfare are met. All staff have up-to-date safeguarding training and paediatric first-aid training, and are aware of their responsibilities in ensuring the safety of children.
- 2.28 The setting benefits from a strong and supportive team who are committed to improvement and the provision of good-quality care. Existing arrangements for staff supervision are not yet fully developed and formalised.
- 2.29 The leadership and management are effective in evaluating practice and securing continuous improvement that improves children's life chances.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

- 2.30 The overall effectiveness of leadership and management is good.
- 2.31 The early years leadership team has identified areas for future development, which are part of the whole-school improvement plan. The quality of the provision and effectiveness of record keeping is appropriately monitored. A well-established appraisal system supports staff development and identifies possible future training needs. Supervision meetings are currently held informally with the head of Nursery when staff feel it is necessary. The primary focus is on dealing with any concerns about the needs of individual children with less emphasis on the wider purposes of supervision.
- 2.32 Staff are committed to working together to provide a welcoming, safe environment where children are happy. The setting is well resourced with age-appropriate toys and it has easy access to the outdoors. Routines are well embedded and ensure that children are well cared for. Staff have mostly appropriate opportunities to discuss and evaluate the effectiveness of the provision with the senior leadership team.
- 2.33 Learning programmes provide a well-balanced curriculum which meets the statutory requirements of the EYFS. They are designed to provide the children a range of experiences to develop confidence and stimulate their interest and enjoyment. Monthly overview plans reflect a good use of the outdoors to explore such themes as signs of spring, looking at animals, and exploration and enjoyment of the open spaces. Good focus is placed on children's learning and development in the prime areas of learning.

- 2.34 The setting promotes equality by ensuring that each child has the opportunity to achieve as much as they are able, relative to their age and stage of development. Awareness of diversity is promoted throughout the setting through the celebration of different religious festivals. The promotion of British values is at the very early stages of integration into daily practice. Children are encouraged to share, to listen to one another and make some choices. Their safety and welfare is given a high priority, and arrangements to protect them and prevent radicalisation and extremism meet all statutory requirements. All staff have paediatric first-aid training and they receive regular safeguarding updates. The procedures for the administration of medicines and the recording of accidents are followed rigorously. Risk assessments of the learning environment both indoors and outside for the self-contained Nursery building ensure that the children are safe. Staffing ratios meet requirements.
- 2.35 Overall, parents are very positive about the provision. They appreciate the care, cuddles and nurture given to their children and the approachability of staff. In conversations, parents stated that they welcome the regular emails about school dates and events, and others commented that they like to receive the verbal information provided about daily routines.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

- 2.36 The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good.
- 2.37 Staff are suitably qualified and are supportive of one another, sharing their expertise and knowledge of the age range. They have appropriate expectations for all groups of children. Staff in the baby room were observed to gently encourage children to be active learners. Support was given to a child who was trying to sit up until he finally achieved in doing so. Practitioners working with children over the age of twelve months were encouraging and caring, though expectations were appropriate rather than consistently high. Good focus is placed on the development of children's independence. This was evident at lunch and snack times when children were given individual face cloths to independently wipe their hands and face. When going for a walk, children were encouraged to hold hands and respond to what they saw and heard. A child walking by the stream exclaimed excitedly 'I see water!'.
- 2.38 A carefully planned emphasis is placed on the prime areas of learning, which ensures children develop their personal, physical and communication skills. Monthly planning sheets reflect a good knowledge and understanding of the types of activities that will engage and motivate the children and move their learning and development forward. They also identify children who will benefit from particular activities and experiences to make good progress in areas of their learning. Regular monitoring against expected developmental milestones ensures that children who may need additional support are identified and supported if necessary.
- 2.39 Parents are invited to a parents' evening twice each year to discuss their child's learning journey and to be updated on their child's progress. End of year reports detail children's progress in the prime areas of learning and inform parents of the level of development their children have achieved relative to expectations for their age. Parents are provided information about the next steps, which will be the focus of their children's future learning experience. At present, opportunities for parents to contribute to the assessment of their children's learning and development are limited. Useful assessment information is gathered when the children join the setting. Thereafter, practitioners take photographs of children's interest and engagement to enter into their learning journey record which is used to support judgements about their progress. Senior leaders work with staff to track children's progress and identify children who may need extra support. The day-to-day assessment and evaluation of learning outcomes is insufficiently rigorous. Teaching supports the development of children's communication and language skills and their physical and emotional skills, thereby preparing them well for the next stage in their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

- 2.40 The personal development, behaviour and welfare of children are good.
- 2.41 There is a positive culture throughout the setting. Staff work well together to create a learning environment in which children are happy to engage in a range of learning experiences. Young children were observed experimenting with different ways of making sounds with percussion instruments, and the properties of green foam were a source of great delight for children in another group. Children respond positively to encouragement given by adults and enjoy their learning. They are supported in their exploration of their surroundings and in their investigation of items of interest. Warm relationships with adults promote the development of children's confidence so that they are willing to have a 'can do' approach to new learning opportunities. Children joyfully joined in an activity playing with strips of crepe paper. They enthusiastically threw the streamers into the air and showed their engagement through laughter, jumping and repeating the activity. Staff have a good understanding of the needs of each age group, but the quality and frequency of adult interactions do not always fully promote children's engagement and interest.
- 2.42 When young children are able to walk without support they move on to the next class in the setting. They are carefully prepared for the transition by mixing with the older children whenever possible, for example when they go for the daily walk, when they have breakfast and by having a series of planned short visits. Children are happy and secure in the environment, and are quickly comforted and reassured if they become unsettled. A good focus is placed on healthy eating. Care and hygiene routines are strengths of the setting. Children have access to drinking water throughout the day and have regular outdoor time.
- 2.43 Prompt and regular attendance is evident, and any latecomers are immediately entered into the register. Practitioners are very aware of each child's pattern of attendance. Children behave well and display kindness towards one another. They listen attentively to adults and follow simple instructions when tidying up and preparing to go outside. Children are developing an understanding of personal safety, as was demonstrated when they followed the instruction to go down the slide feet first in order to stay safe and when they held hands on their morning walk.

Outcomes for children

- 2.44 Outcomes for children are good.
- 2.45 Children are on course to reach or exceed the level of development expected for their age. All children, including those with SEND or EAL, make good progress in relation to their starting points. Baseline documentation completed when a child enters the setting is reviewed at regular intervals to monitor progress which is recorded on each child's individual record.
- 2.46 Children under two make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development as a result of the sensitive supportive interactions with adults and the opportunities to explore their immediate environment independently. Staff encourage babies to develop language skills through the use of specific vocabulary, gesture and facial expression. Babies engage well with adults when they are singing by joining in with clapping and listening intently. The emphasis on developing communication skills, physical skills and independence ensures that children make good progress from their starting points and move confidently on to the next stage of their education.

Compliance with statutory requirements

2.47 **The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.**

Recommendations for further improvement

2.48 The school is advised to make the following improvements to its provision for children in the early years.

- Develop and formalise a supervision policy and monitor the required procedures to support the welfare, training and further development of staff.
- Actively promote British values in children's learning experience.

3. INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 3.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff, the proprietor and with members of the advisory board, and attended form periods. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation and records made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Timothy Holgate	Reporting inspector
Mr Stephen McKernan	Compliance team inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)
Mrs Kathryn Henry	Co-ordinating inspector for early years (former deputy head, IAPS school)
Mrs Sally Donaldson	Team inspector for EYFS (Head of Kindergarten, HMC school)