

# Grafton House Preparatory School

1 Warrington Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire OL6 6XB

## Inspection dates

5–7 March 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The proprietor is dedicated to the school. She has very high expectations of both staff and pupils, and a precise understanding of the quality of teaching and learning.
- Together with the operations manager, the headteacher and staff, the proprietor ensures that all the independent school standards are met.
- Teachers form very strong relationships with pupils, and an in-depth understanding of pupils' educational and personal development needs.
- Good teaching ensures that pupils make strong progress in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Effective phonics teaching helps younger pupils develop the skills they need to become fluent, confident readers.
- Year 6 pupils attain highly in a wide range of subjects and are well prepared for entry into various grammar and high schools.
- Systems to assess pupils' skills and abilities are accurate, as are procedures to monitor their progress. However, teachers do not always adhere to the school's feedback and assessment policy.
- Older pupils are skilled writers. However, opportunities for them to practise and refine their writing skills across the curriculum are somewhat limited.
- Teachers make sure pupils have a strong understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural matters and British values.
- Pupils are safe at school. They benefit from a rich curriculum, which stimulates their interests and engagement in lessons. However, few opportunities are available for pupils to hone their investigative skills in science.
- Pupils thrive on responsibility. They perform their roles in earnest as reading buddies, school council members and classroom monitors.
- Pupils' behaviour is good, they enjoy learning new things and have a thirst for knowledge and information. Pupils say they feel safe at school. Their attendance is good and improving.
- Parents and carers are highly complementary about Grafton House, which they describe as an 'absolutely fabulous school'. All parents are of the view that their children are happy, safe and making good progress.

### 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 learning by:
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise and refine their writing skills across the curriculum
  - broadening the science curriculum to ensure that pupils better develop their practical, investigative activities.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that teachers consistently adhere to the school's feedback and assessment policy.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Grafton House School is a small family-friendly school, where the proprietor, teachers, parents and carers work closely together for the benefit of pupils. The proprietor lives the school's mission and values, which relate to, 'integrity', 'respect', 'families', 'accountability' and 'innovation'. Leaders' approach to teaching and learning supports pupils to achieve well academically and enhances their personal and social development.
- The proprietor is committed to ensuring that all pupils realise their potential and enjoy their time at the school. The proprietor is very 'hands on' and has a comprehensive understanding of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress and attainment. Together with the operations manager, who is responsible for both the school and pre-school services, and the headteacher and staff, the proprietor ensures that all the independent school standards are met.
- Staff morale is very high. Teachers who spoke with the inspector, as well as those who completed the inspection survey, indicated that leaders use professional development to encourage, challenge and support their improvement. They are proud to work at the school, which they say has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers take the initiative to ensure that they are fully conversant with the current developments in education. In addition, the proprietor works well with an increasing range of partners and ensures that staff have access to both local authority training and that provided in other schools.
- Senior leaders regularly check the quality of teaching by analysing the quality of work in pupils' books and talking with pupils about their learning. Feedback given to teachers is clear, helping them to further develop their practice. Teachers are set precise improvement targets, which are linked to enhancing their teaching and raising pupils' achievement.
- Pupils benefit from an interesting curriculum, which captures their interests and ensures their good progress. They visit various places of interest, such as museums, libraries and the theatre, and are encouraged to follow their interests in areas such as music, where extra tuition is available after school. Pupils regularly engage in sporting activities, such as swimming, cricket, football, basketball, tennis, sports multi-skills and hockey, and regularly participate in after-school clubs.
- Leaders' promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils learn about the major world faiths, including Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and Islam, and have visited various places of worship. They celebrate events, such as Eid and Diwali, and have a good appreciation of the culturally diverse nature of British society. Pupils have a strong empathy for those less fortunate than themselves and have collected funds for many worthy causes. For example, they have organised events to raise money for cancer charities and a bereavement charity.
- Pupils have a well-developed appreciation and understanding of British values. They demonstrated fair play in the way they conducted themselves in class and related to each other. Pupils understand the rule of law, and regularly put democratic principles into practice in the school council. Pupils are good citizens. For example, as e-council members, they make expeditions into the area immediately around the school to pick up

litter for recycling. Pupils are very responsible. Older pupils demonstrated their maturity when they listened to their younger peers read and helped them with their learning.

- Parents are highly positive about the school. They indicate that their children are cared for exceptionally well. Parents are appreciative of the fact that teachers and the proprietor are available for them to talk with before and after school. All parents who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, indicated that their children are safe, happy and making good progress. Typically, parents who met with the inspector and submitted text messages, stated: 'My children look forward to going to school every day because teachers provide a very engaging environment,' and 'My child loves learning and has developed quickly both emotionally and academically,' and 'Teachers set extremely high standards for all children.'

## **Governance**

- The proprietor, who is the chief executive officer of the school and nurseries in the Sunflower Group, has many years' experience in education. She regularly attends regional and national education conferences and training events, which help to ensure that she is fully aware of current developments in education and is well placed to help improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school. The proprietor is frequently in the school and knows what needs to further improve.
- The proprietor supports and challenges teachers appropriately and has high expectations of both staff and pupils. The proprietor ensures that procedures to manage staff performance, including their teaching practice, are effective.
- The proprietor and the head of operations ensure that standards at the school are continually improving. Both are well trained and fully aware of their responsibilities to protect pupils from harm. Their safeguarding training is current and regularly updated.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Designated safeguarding leaders have had specialist training in preparedness for their roles. All staff are familiar with the government's latest guidance on keeping children safe in education.
- All staff have had 'county lines' training to develop their awareness of the organised criminal distribution of drugs from cities into smaller towns and rural areas using children and vulnerable people. Staff and the proprietor have also had 'Prevent' duty training.
- Well-established procedures are in place to record any concerns raised by pupils. All staff know how to spot signs of neglect and/or abuse. Appropriate checks are made on the suitability of staff to ensure they are safe to work with children.
- The safeguarding policy is comprehensive and current. It is available on the school's website and to parents on request. The school carries out regular risk assessments to ensure that pupils are always safe in school and when on educational trips and visits.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teachers have very good relationships with pupils, with whom they form strong bonds. Due to small class sizes, teachers know pupils exceptionally well and give attention to each child to ensure they reach their full potential.
- Teachers usually plan exciting and stimulating activities, which harness pupils' creativity and promote their love of learning. They encourage pupils to engage in independent research in most subjects, share their views, and work collaboratively with their peers in English and mathematics. This helps to make sure that pupils develop into confident, successful learners.
- Teachers encourage pupils to take pride in their work. This is evident in classroom displays, which show that pupils pay great attention to detail in their art work and take care in the presentation of their written work. Pupils' art books show well-executed pieces of work in the style of artists such as Piet Mondrian, and well-punctuated extracts of writing, taken from the work of well-known authors. However, opportunities for pupils to practise and refine their writing skills across the curriculum are somewhat limited. Occasionally, this prevents them from demonstrating their very competent writing skills.
- Teachers ensure that pupils acquire good calculation and problem-solving skills. This was evident in a key stage 2 mathematics class, where pupils engaged in a range of different activities to develop their fluency in using operations and their preparedness for different assessments. While some pupils racked their brains on mental calculations, subtracting and adding sums of money 'in their head', others worked with coins and graphs to add and subtract different sums of money. The most able pupils practised challenging problem-solving activities from previous examination papers.
- Phonics teaching is good. Typically, pupils listen carefully to teachers' instructions and enjoy reading and using new words. This was exemplified in a class where pupils were concentrating on sounding out and reading new words, such as, 'hunt', 'band' and 'shrink'. After learning these words, pupils were then asked to use them. Pupils demonstrated their good comprehension of the new words in the sentences such as, 'I went to the shop and bought a magic wand which I used to shrink myself.'
- Teachers encourage pupils' inquisitiveness about the natural world. This was evident when pupils learned to classify different animals, including herbivores, carnivores and omnivores. They quickly grasped the notion that some animals, such as crows and other scavengers, eat almost anything, while others, such as cows, feed mainly on grass. Pupils were very confident in their discussions and could identify a wide range of animals from their peers' descriptions. However, pupils' practical skills are limited because they rarely engage in investigative activities in science.
- Teachers encourage pupils to read in class. Pupils are familiar with the work of a range of authors and different playwrights, and are skilled in annotating poems by writers including Wilfred Owen, Brenda Williams and Robert Graves.
- It is not always evident that teachers consistently adhere to the school's feedback and assessment policy. Teachers give pupils verbal feedback on their work and encourage them to discuss how they can improve their reading, writing and mathematics. However, occasionally, pupils' punctuation and spelling errors go unchecked. As a result, they sometimes repeat errors.

**Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes. They are confident, self-assured learners who enjoy seeking out new knowledge and information. Pupils commit to improving their work in subjects, including English, mathematics and science. They are encouraged to cooperate with others and are resilient to failure.
- Many opportunities are available for pupils to develop their leadership skills, equipping them with the attributes they need for the next stage of their learning in secondary school. Older pupils are happy to listen to their younger peers read and give them good support and advice on how to improve their pronunciation. They relish all opportunities available for them to demonstrate they are responsible, mature members of the school community.
- Pupils have a good understanding of safe and unsafe situations. They understand the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise, and how both contribute to a healthy mind and body. Pupils learn about the harmful effects of tobacco and alcohol, as well as illegal drugs, through the personal, social, health and citizenship aspects of the curriculum.
- Pupils are adamant there is never any bullying in school. They say racism is when 'you treat someone badly because of the colour of their skin or religion,' and indicate that it never happens in school. Similarly, older pupils understand homophobic bullying, which they say is 'not an issue'.
- Pupils say they always feel safe in school. They are confident to share their concerns with staff, secure in the knowledge that such concerns will be taken seriously and dealt with promptly.
- Older pupils have an in-depth understanding of internet safety and know how to stay safe while online. They informed the inspector that, 'You should never click on "rogue links" or visit sites that are not age appropriate.' All pupils learn about the benefits and dangers of technology through internet safety week. Pupils know they should always inform an adult if they are unsure about accessing a website.
- Past pupils who met with the inspector, now successful pupils in Year 10, were highly positive about their experience in Grafton House. The school has helped them to be resilient, confident learners, with exceptionally high career aspirations.

**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are excellent ambassadors for the school and are well mannered and eager to help others. They are proud of their school and warmly welcome visitors. Pupils take care of school facilities and move around the school sensibly and with due consideration for others.

- Pupils are of the view that behaviour is good 'almost all of the time'. They acknowledge that sometimes people 'fall out', but indicate that friendships are soon reformed after minor disagreements. Pupils collect counters for good behaviour, which they use to access the golden table on special lunchtime occasions, where they are waited on by their peers. Younger pupils like to feature on the sticker chart and aspire to having their names put into the 'mystery box' and the chance of winning various prizes.
- Pupils are patient, follow instructions well, wait to take their turn and celebrate the achievements of their peers. This was evident during a physical education (PE) lesson when pupils individually demonstrated their coordination and football-handling skills. The element of competition brought pupils to life when they formed teams and applauded their teammates' speed, agility and 'slalom skills'.
- Pupils attend school regularly because they enjoy learning with their friends and fear missing out on new learning experiences. On the rare occasions that attendance is low, the proprietor and teachers work closely with families to improve it.
- During the inspection, pupils' behaviour in class was good, as it was during breaktimes and lunchtimes. The proprietor and operations manager are of the view that behaviour is good. Staff, pupils and parents who completed the inspection questionnaires were all exceptionally positive about pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. The school's own records and inspection evidence indicate that behaviour is typically good over time.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Records of pupils' progress, observations of teaching and scrutiny of pupils' books confirm that, from their different starting points, pupils make strong progress overall in a wide range of subjects, including English, mathematics and humanities. The school's own test results show that for several years all pupils have attained highly at the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Due to small class sizes, it is not possible to make comparisons between the performance of different cohorts of pupils. For example, this year there are no pupils in either the Reception class or Year 2.
- The school's own records and assessment data, moderated by the local authority, show that in recent years all children have attained a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year. This includes those currently in Year 1, who are very well prepared for their learning in key stage 1.
- For several years, all pupils in Year 1 have been secure in their phonic skills and knowledge in the national screening check. Current Year 1 pupils read often, as shown in their reading records, and benefit from good teaching and additional support from reading buddies. Pupils like to read and make strong progress in this area. The most able pupils enjoy reading challenging texts written by well-known authors and poets. The school is currently implementing a systematic programme of teaching phonics in order to ensure that pupils' reading, writing and spelling skills are of a high standard.
- Pupils make strong progress in writing, as shown in their workbooks, ongoing assessments and the school's own performance data. Their comprehension skills are well developed, as evident in their analysis of formal and informal styles of writing. Most pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling skills are good, as is the presentation of their

work. However, opportunities for pupils to practise and refine their writing across the curriculum are sometimes limited.

- Strong mathematics teaching ensures that pupils develop good calculation and problem-solving skills. This is evident in pupils' workbooks, which contain many examples of challenging multiplication and division word problems. Regular assessments of pupils' skills alert teachers to any areas of weakness. For example, recent assessments show that pupils' understanding of geometry and their use of fractions are not as strong as other areas of mathematics. As a result, these are prime areas of focus for teachers.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Teachers identify such pupils' needs quickly and develop personalised learning programmes which help to ensure their good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and other subjects.
- Pupils make strong progress in a broad range of additional subjects, including art, religious education, technology, history, and geography. The school identifies and harnesses pupils' talents, which helps pupils to excel in their learning. For example, in art pupils are encouraged to develop their creative skills, and as a result they realise their potential. Pupils' progress in science is not as good as in other subjects because they rarely apply their scientific understanding to practical, investigative activities.
- The good teaching from which pupils benefit, and their subsequent strong progress, ensures that they are well equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful learners in grammar and other secondary schools.

## School details

Unique reference number	130399
DfE registration number	357/6001
Inspection number	10067886

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	12
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Elaine Sagar
Headteacher	Robert Wynn
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,000
Telephone number	0161 343 3015
Website	<a href="https://graftonhouse.co.uk/">https://graftonhouse.co.uk/</a>
Email address	admin@graftonhouse.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–14 January 2016

## Information about this school

- Grafton House Preparatory School is a non-selective independent school in the centre of Ashton-Under-Lyne. The school provides for pupils aged three to 11 years old. At the time of the inspection, there were no children in either the Reception or Year 2 classes.
- Through its partnership with families, the school aims to: 'educate and innovate to prepare children to be confident, resilient lifelong learners... We offer a safe environment where your children become confident learners, equipping them with the skills for their journey into high school and beyond.'
- Currently, the 12 pupils on roll are taught in two classes, one for four Year 1 pupils, the other for eight pupils from Years 3 to 6. Pupils are taught together in some subjects, such

as PE and reading. The key stage 2 teacher is also the headteacher.

- The school is part of the Sunflower Group, which includes four day-nurseries based in Newton, Hyde, Ashton-Under-Lyne and Stalybridge. The Ashton-Under-Lyne nursery operates from the same site as the school and is subject to a separate inspection.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector, together with the proprietor, observed learning in a range of subjects, including phonics and PE.
- Pupils' work was scrutinised during observations and separately.
- Meetings were held with the proprietor, head of operations, headteacher and teachers. Meetings were also held with parents and past pupils.
- The inspector considered 12 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, as well as 12 text messages submitted during the inspection. The inspector scrutinised six responses to the pupil questionnaire and two responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector met with a group of pupils. Informal discussions were held with pupils throughout the course of the inspection. The inspector examined a range of documentary evidence. This included: checks on the quality of teaching; safeguarding documentation, including risk assessments; various records of pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour; development plans; and the school's records and checks on the suitability of staff to work with children.

## Inspection team

Lenford White, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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