

Gracefield School

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number 801/6009
Unique reference number 109343
Inspection number 341961
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Reporting inspector Wiola Hola HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended.

Age group: 4–11

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.¹

Information about the school

Gracefield is a mixed independent primary school for pupils aged from four to 11 years. It is situated in a detached Victorian house in the residential area of Fishponds in east Bristol. There are 80 pupils on roll, 11 of whom receive nursery funding. All pupils attend full time. The school was last inspected in February 2007. The current headteacher took up post in September 2009. She has previously worked as a teacher in the school and, together with her husband, is also a proprietor. The school aims to ensure that all its children are happy and successful in a secure and caring environment. It aims to prepare each child for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

Evaluation of the school

The school provides a good education for its all its pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It provides extremely well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which is outstanding.

Through the school's good curriculum, and with good teaching, pupils make good progress overall. The school meets safeguarding requirements. It also meets virtually all other regulations. The previous inspection report recommended that the school should 'devise and implement a more robust method to check pupils' progress'. The school has addressed this recommendation successfully to a large extent. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have access to the outdoors for learning, but this is not as well developed as in many other such settings.

Quality of education

The overall quality of education is good. The good curriculum meets all requirements and the pupils' needs. It covers the subjects of the National Curriculum and also French for all pupils. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. In all classes, outline plans by subject or topic are presented very clearly and supported by teachers' good weekly and daily lesson plans. Basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic are covered very well, so as to ensure that pupils build on them securely from year to year and make good progress. Pupils' reading and writing are developed particularly well because of the wide range of genres pupils are

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

exposed to and encouraged to write in. Since the last inspection, the school has worked successfully on improving the overall accuracy and presentation of pupils' written work which are now good. The delightful library, run by pupil librarians, adds greatly to pupils' love of reading, as do the many occasions when teachers or pupils read aloud to each other in class. Pupils' numeracy skills are also developed well, although the application of these in a range of real-life and relevant contexts is not undertaken as routinely as it might be.

Another strength in the curriculum is in the topic work undertaken. Through well-chosen topics, subjects are covered in engaging and relevant ways. Pupils learn to transfer their knowledge and skills across subjects, employing a variety of learning styles, including some personal research and much creativity. Pupils enjoy the many trips to places of interest, linked to topics being studied. They also speak with pride about the school assemblies and concerts in which all pupils play a part, developing their confidence and talents. Pupils in Year 6 have a residential experience. The wide range of extra-curricular activities is much appreciated and enjoyed by pupils. Clubs are well attended and supported by staff. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching in French, information and communication technology (ICT) and music. The good provision of computers allows for each pupil in a class to work independently to acquire skills in ICT. The use of ICT to support and enhance learning across all subjects exists but is not extensive. The curriculum as a whole plays a great part in preparing pupils well for their next steps in life and learning.

Teaching and assessment are good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They plan well so that pupils engage in a variety of activities that are often very enjoyable for the pupils and undertaken with good pace. Teachers' clear and high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour contribute to pupils' good learning and progress. Behaviour in lessons is good and only slips occasionally when tasks lack challenge or interest. Teachers often encourage pupils to think deeply and discover things for themselves; sometimes the teacher steps in too soon with an answer or support, or misses an opportunity to offer an extra challenge. Teachers are very well organised. They encourage pupils to produce work that is of a high standard in terms of accuracy, inventiveness and presentation. They do so with much success. Some teachers are very adept at checking pupils' learning, lesson by lesson, through effective questioning and other means. Rather too often, however, a question is posed to only one pupil and it is not clear how others would have answered. Nevertheless, the small class sizes allow teachers to know their pupils very well and meet their specific needs. The relatively few pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported well.

Systems for assessment have been extended and improved since the last inspection. Managers can evaluate easily and accurately the extent of each individual pupil's progress, but it is less easy to evaluate the progress of a class or group as a whole. Records and folders of each pupil's attainment are kept methodically. A commercially available system is used to compile attainment records and this supports teachers in planning the next steps in pupils' learning. Test results in Year 6 vary from year to

year, depending on the nature of the specific groups of pupils but, taken as a whole, they are generally at or above the national average.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

This area of the school's work is outstanding and one that is greatly appreciated by parents. From the youngest age, children and pupils grow as polite, responsible and considerate young people, mindful of the needs and feelings of others, and quick to offer help to each other, staff and visitors. They enjoy school enormously, have very positive attitudes to learning, and behave well. The support pupils give each other on the 'friendship bench' in the playground is one of the ways they recognise and meet each other's needs. Pupils speak courteously and confidently, expressing their opinions clearly and openly, taking turns, and listening to each other. They understand and accept each other's differences. This understanding is supported in many ways, in the study of the lives, cultures and beliefs of people in the local area and from around the world, for example, and through pupils' involvement in local, national or international charities. Pupils develop a very good awareness of the spiritual dimension of their own lives and that of others. The school is successful in preparing pupils for their next steps in life and learning, and for their future economic well-being.

Older pupils are very good role models. They are given opportunities to guide younger pupils, in giving previously prepared presentations about road safety, for example, or in taking a lead in the school council collecting pupils' views and presenting them to staff. Pupils develop well their knowledge about how they can contribute to society and about public institutions, through visits to a Lifeskills Centre and in other ways. Attendance is generally satisfactory.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school has made several improvements to this area since the last inspection. Consequently, the provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is now good and much praised by parents. All required policies and procedures are in place. Staff have received appropriate training on child protection issues and some further training is planned. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002. The day-to-day supervision of pupils is good with great attention given to ensuring pupils' physical and emotional well-being, in school and on any trips and visits. Pupils have a good awareness of how to stay safe in various situations. They feel safe in school because they and staff treat each other with great care and respect. Relationships are very strong. Children in the Reception class are supported well to make a very good start to school life.

The school's work on promoting healthy lifestyles is excellent and has been recognised in the Healthy School Award. Pupils talk readily about how to stay fit and healthy and enjoy healthy snacks at lunch and break times. They know the benefit of exercise and participate fully in the 'Wake and Shake' activity at the start of each

day. They enjoy sports activities at school and are encouraged to spend time in the fresh air outdoors; the school uniform includes a shower-proof hooded jacket and pupils say they have break times outside happily in all weathers. Each class manages a section of the small front garden. For example, the 'eat-a-metre' initiative results in a square metre of land producing a wide variety of fruit and vegetables.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Since the last inspection, the school has improved its procedures for the appointment of staff. These now meet requirements. Staff files and the single central record contain the necessary information so as to ensure the suitability of all adults engaging with the pupils.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is well maintained, bright, clean and attractive with delightful displays in classrooms and around the school. Resources are extremely well stored and organised. Classrooms are very tidy. They are small but with sufficient space for the class sizes. Spaces are used well. The top floor with its suite of computers and library enhances pupils' learning opportunities. Classes have staggered break times and thus the small playground is adequate. A local park and church hall are used for sporting activities. The school has added some hand washbasins since the last inspection so that requirements are now met.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school prospectus has been revised since the last inspection and contains some of the required information. It and the very helpful booklet given to prospective parents contain some of the school's policies and give a clear indication of what others are available on request. Parents did not receive particulars of the school's academic performance in 2008; the school is about to issue this information for 2009. Parents have suitable opportunities to meet formally and informally with school staff to discuss their child's progress, and they receive termly reports on this. A colourful and lively weekly newsletter gives parents much information about the life of the school.

Procedures for handling complaints

Procedures for handling complaints are satisfactory and meet requirements. There have been no formal complaints in the last year.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. It covers all the areas of learning for children of this age and is conducted in a safe, healthy and stimulating

environment. Children join eagerly into the good range of activities prepared for them. They are imaginative, creative, confident and inquisitive learners. They are also well behaved and cooperative, when asked to tidy up for example. A reasonable balance exists between activities that the teacher directs closely and those that children choose or design for themselves. The teacher and teaching assistant have established good relationships and routines that make the children feel secure. They support the children well and encourage language development.

Children in the Reception class talked with animation about their much enjoyed trip to Westonbirt Arboretum. Pupils currently in Year 1 speak with tremendous fondness of their time in the Reception class.

Staff take many photographs of children at work. The photographs, as well as examples of the children's work and incidental or formal notes made by teachers and parents, are compiled into beautiful spiral bound booklets that show clearly the good progress made by the children over a year. Most children reach or exceed the expected learning goals.

Leadership and management are good. The indoor space for the number of children is adequate. Children have some opportunity to learn outdoors but easy access to this, throughout the year, is not readily available. The school is considering how it might develop the outdoor learning area. Resources are generally good.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.²

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- provide particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations (paragraph 6(3)(e)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- develop further the school's systems for analysing pupils' progress

² www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm

- improve provision for children in the Reception class to learn outdoors.

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How good are the outcomes for children in the EYFS?		✓		
What is the quality of provision in the EYFS?		✓		
How effectively is the EYFS led and managed?		✓		
Overall effectiveness: how well does the school meet the needs of children in the EYFS?		✓		

School details

Name of school	Gracefield School		
DCSF number	801/6009		
Unique reference number	109343		
Type of school	Primary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1950		
Age range of pupils	4–11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 50	Girls: 30	Total: 80
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,645		
Address of school	266 Overndale Road Fishponds Bristol BS16 2RG		
Telephone number	0117 9567977		
Fax number	0117 9563397		
Email address	enquiries@gracefieldschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Morgan		
Proprietor	Mr Ivan and Mrs Elizabeth Morgan		
Reporting inspector	Wiola Hola HMI		
Dates of inspection	29–30 September 2009		