

Downham Preparatory School and Montessori Nursery

Inspection dates

19 March 2019

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(1), 2(2)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b), 2(2)(c), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(f), 2(2)(g), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i)

- For current pupils, school leaders have an appropriate curriculum policy in place that covers a wide range of subjects. They have a clear rationale for the teaching of subjects that considers the ages and aptitudes of pupils. Where schemes of work or published materials are used, these are appropriate to the stage of education. Leaders continue to improve the curriculum, as identified in the standard inspection in September 2018.
- Leaders have in place curriculum plans appropriate for Year 7 pupils in a wide range of subjects. This is because leaders identify a few pupils who are exceeding the expectations of Year 6. These pupils are already receiving a provision that is suitable for key stage 3.
- Leaders understand the differences that pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) presents for key stage 3. However, plans and schemes of work are yet to be formalised to ensure that pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 receive the appropriate education and career guidance.
- PSHE plans that are in place for primary age pupils reflect the school aims, interests and aptitudes of pupils. They promote British Values effectively. Staff encourage respect for others, including those with protected characteristics, as set out in the 2010 Equality Act. Pupils experience a range of activities and opportunities to participate in community life or visit local places of educational interest.
- The standards included in these paragraphs are likely to be met.

Paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h), 3(i), 3(j)

- Where older pupils achieve exceptionally well, school leaders already move them up a year as part of a gifted and talented programme. This means that a few pupils receive

education that is currently at the standard for Year 7. This is one of the age groups that school leaders wish to formally offer if the material change is accepted. The curriculum is suitably planned for their age and aptitudes and demonstrates that leaders have thought about the requirements of the key stage 3 curriculum.

- Currently, leaders provide a good quality of education for all pupils. Pupils have opportunities to learn and make good progress in a wide range of subjects. Leaders have chosen to teach key stage 2 pupils in subject-specific rooms with specialist teachers. As a result, pupils are already familiar with different approaches to learning, so the transition into Years 7 and 8 is appropriate and suitable.
- The school has effective systems in place to measure the academic progress of key stage 3 pupils that includes comparing with other pupils of a similar age nationally. Since the previous inspection, the headteacher ensures that staff use this information increasingly well to plan learning that helps pupils make better progress. This is especially the case in English and mathematics, but not exclusively so.
- Resources are suitable. Older pupils use the internet for research in history, for example. Pupils have opportunities to develop their creative learning through participation in school productions. The music room is well resourced so that pupils develop their skills and appreciation of different musical genres.
- The standards included in these paragraphs are likely to be met.

Paragraph 4

- The school's assessment system is firmly in place. Parents receive information regarding their child's performance. The headmaster ensures that the material used to assess pupils' performance is recognised nationally so that the information leaders have is accurate and reliable. Pupils are making good progress.
- The standard included in this paragraph is likely to be met.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Paragraph 5, 5(a), 5(b), 5(b)(i), 5(b)(ii), 5(b)(iii), 5(b)(iv), 5(b)(v), 5(b)(vi), 5(b)(vii), 5(c), 5(d), 5(d)(i), 5(d)(ii), 5(d)(iii)

- At the previous inspection, the quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education was judged to be a strength. This remains the case. Adults actively promote mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths, beliefs and cultures.
- There is suitable provision for encouraging pupils to distinguish right from wrong. There is a clear code of conduct that is positive and respectful. Pupils demonstrate a desire to learn. They share their views and opinions respectfully and thoughtfully.
- There are several extra-curricular activities on offer to pupils. Many of the activities are suitable for key stage 3 pupils. Pupils also join with another school close by to create teams to play in local sporting events.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are respectful and articulate. In lessons, older pupils explain their understanding maturely and use technical and subject-specific vocabulary effectively. This indicates that concepts have

previously been taught well and remembered.

- The standard for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a),7(b)

- The school's safeguarding policy is in date and reflects the current guidance from the Secretary of State. Staff are regularly trained and updated so that child protection practices reflect the policies. Safeguarding was judged to be effective in September 2018.
- There is clear accountability for safeguarding and child protection in the school. The designated safeguarding leader and staff have been appropriately trained in line with 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (2018). Posters around the school and in staff areas help ensure that staff understand their responsibilities and the procedures to use.
- Leaders have considered the safeguarding implications of their material change, including when further staff may need to be employed, and induction and training needs.
- The standards included in this paragraph are likely to be met.

Paragraph 11

- Leaders have implemented an appropriate health and safety policy. The policy is kept up to date and monitored by the headmaster.
- The standard included in this paragraph is likely to be met.

Paragraph 12

- The school has suitable plans and evacuation procedures in place. Staff undertake regular fire drills, so adults and pupils are fully aware of the school procedures.
- Leaders ensure the building is well maintained with respect to fire safety. Fire exits are well maintained.
- The standard included in this paragraph is likely to be met.

Paragraph 14

- Leaders make sure that pupils are appropriately supervised at all times of the school day. Leaders are aware of the differences in supervision requirements for older pupils if the material change is granted. They have considered this aspect carefully and have already identified areas of the school that can be for key stage 3 pupils' sole use.
- In the previous inspection report, it was mentioned that relationships between staff and pupils were strong. This continues to be the case.
- The standard included in this paragraph is likely to be met.

Paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- Leaders have implemented an appropriate risk assessment policy. Risks are suitably identified, and actions, accountability and emergency procedures are clear.

- Staff ensure that they supervise younger pupils well when moving between school buildings. Leaders have assessed the potential risks on-site and take reasonable steps to reduce them.
- The standard included in this paragraph is likely to be met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraph 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(i), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(c)(iii), 18(2)(c)(iv), 18(2)(d), 18(2)(e), 18(2)(f), 18(3), 19(2), 19(2)(a), 19(2)(a)(i), 19(2)(a)(i)(aa), 19(2)(a)(i)(bb), 19(2)(a)(i)(cc), 19(2)(a)(ii), 19(2)(b), 19(2)(c), 19(2)(d), 19(2)(d)(i), 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(2)(e), 19(3), 20(6), 20(6)(a), 20(6)(a)(i), 20(6)(a)(ii), 20(6)(b), 20(6)(b)(i), 20(6)(b)(ii), 20(6)(b)(iii), 20(6)(c), 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(3)(a)(v), 21(3)(a)(vi), 21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(4), 21(5), 21(5)(a), 21(5)(a)(i), 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(b), 21(5)(c), 21(6), 21(7), 21(7)(a), 21(7)(b)

- Leaders have employed teachers who already have previous experience and subject expertise that are appropriate to teach pupils in Years 7 and 8. From September 2019, the projected numbers of pupils who will be taught in Year 7 is very small. Leaders expect these pupils to be taught by current staff.
- Since September 2018, no new staff have been employed. As a result, checks on the school's record for the suitable employment of adults to work with children were not made during this material change. In September, this record was compliant, and the standard met.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the range of checks for employing suitable staff to work with children, that follow the guidance from the Secretary of State.
- If leaders continue to follow current or updated guidance regarding the suitability of staff, supply and proprietors, then the standards included in these paragraphs are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 23(1)(c), 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 24(1)(c), 24(2), 25, 26, 27, 27(a), 27(b), 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(b), 28(1)(c), 28(1)(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b), 29(1), 29(1)(a), 29(1)(b)

- Suitable and firm plans are in place for the introduction of changing rooms for the proposed secondary aged pupils. These changing rooms include showers and are appropriate for privacy and changing for physical education lessons.
- The medical room in the school house is suitable for treatment of pupils. It is close to water and toilet facilities. In the main school building, there is a further and suitable medical room.
- Since the previous inspection in September 2018, the proprietor has changed the organisation of the school playground. Currently, work is underway to add an adventurous climbing apparatus that is suitable for older pupils, including those in key stage 3.
- Currently, pupils are taught in separate and subject-specific rooms. These rooms are

suitable in terms of resources, lighting and acoustics. Class sizes are small, and each room is adequately proportioned.

- Plans are underway for the introduction of a school kitchen so that meals can be prepared on-site. The positioning of the kitchen will mean that pupils must walk outside to reach the science and art rooms.
- Reception aged children have been relocated to the main school building since the previous inspection. Currently, these children do not have an outdoor area for their sole use as an outside classroom. Leaders are currently planning to use a suitable area outside the new classroom as an outdoor classroom.
- If leaders' plans are implemented effectively, then the standards included in these paragraphs are likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c),

- Leaders have considered the implications of older pupils attending the school. Their aim is to be able to provide parents with the option of keeping their children at Downham before moving on to the next school to commence Year 9.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders continue to improve the school. The headmaster has a clear understanding of the independent school standards, and evidence shows that these are reviewed regularly. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. There is strong capacity for further improvement.
- To ensure that all standards continue to be met with the increase in pupils' age to key stage 3, leaders will need to demonstrate that they have:
 - designed and effectively implemented a curriculum for pupils' personal, social, health education that is suitable for key stage 3, including career's guidance
 - provided outdoor classroom provision for children in Reception
 - ensured that the school's assessment processes are effectively used so that these pupils in keys stage 3 make good progress.

Compliance with regulatory requirements and national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school is likely to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards'), the national minimum standards for residential special schools and associated requirements that are relevant to the material change.

School details

Unique reference number	121251
DfE registration number	926/6143
Inspection number	10099586

This inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Other independent school
School status	Independent school
Proprietor	Mrs E Laffeaty-Sharpe
Headteacher	Mark Jefferson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,426 – £9,900
Telephone number	01366 388 066
Website	www.downhamprep.co.uk
Email address	office@downhamprep.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	18 to 20 September 2018

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	2 to 11	4 to 13	4 to 13
Number of pupils on the school roll	151	200	150

1. The number requested by the school to the DfE, included the nursery provision. The nursery has a separate unique reference number EY305661. During this inspection, the registration in terms of pupils' ages and number for the nursery provision and the school was clarified and agreed.
2. Pupils will join the school's admission register from age four, as they start school

in Reception. Consequently, the numbers requested for this material change were much higher than required. The inspector has adjusted the number as a recommendation to the DfE, to include the school unique reference number only.

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	99	150

Information about this school

- Downham Preparatory and Montessori Nursery School is a small independent day school that is privately owned.
- On the school site there is a nursery provision that has a separate registration number and caters for children from zero to four years. Children then move into the school to start their Reception year.
- The proprietor also owns a second nursery setting that is located close to the school.

Information about this inspection

- The school applied for a material change to change its age range from two to 11 years, in order to provide education for a small number of pupils up to the age of 13 years. In this inspection, clarification was made regarding the overlap of ages with the nursery. The change to the age range was agreed. The school age range is requested as four to 13, with school education commencing at Reception. The school still provides education for zero to four in the nursery.
- The inspector held meetings with the proprietor and the headteacher. A meeting was held with the head of curriculum, who is also the designated safeguarding leader.
- The inspector visited classes to determine the quality of the curriculum provision for older pupils. The inspector undertook a tour of the school and premises to check the suitability of leaders' plans and improvements.
- A range of relevant documentation was scrutinised.

Inspection team

Kim Hall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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