



Material Change Inspection Report

Donhead Preparatory School

May 2024

School's details

School	Donhead Preparatory School		
DfE number	315/6004		
Registered charity number	230165		
Address	Donhead Preparatory School 33 Edge Hill Wimbledon London SW19 4NP		
Telephone number	020 89467000		
Email address	office@donhead.org.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Hitchcock		
Chair of governors	Mr Jan Quant		
Proprietor	Trustees for Roman Catholic Purposes		
Age range	4 to 11		
Number of pupils on roll	262		
	Pre-prep	88	Prep 174
Date of inspection	3 May 2024		

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Donhead Preparatory School is an independent day school for male pupils. The school comprises two sections: pre-prep for pupils aged 4 to 7 years, which includes an early years setting; and prep for pupils aged 7 to 11 years. The school has 43 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom seven have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. There are nine pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). The school's previous inspection was a regulatory compliance inspection in January 2022. Since the previous inspection a new headteacher was appointed in January 2024.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.2 This was an announced material change inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to assess the school's proposal to become co-educational at all ages and lower the minimum age of pupils to three years, both with effect from September 2024. The inspection focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs) and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 1, paragraphs 2 (curriculum) and 2A (relationships and sex education)	Met
Part 1, paragraph 3 (teaching)	Met
Part 1, paragraph 4 (framework for pupil's performance)	Met
Part 2, paragraph 5 (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding)	Met
Part 5, paragraph 23 (toilet, washing and changing facilities)	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management)	Met

2. Inspection findings

Quality of education provided – curriculum and relationships and sex education (RSE) [ISSR Part 1, paragraphs 2 and 2A]

- 2.1 The school meets the standards.
- 2.2 The school has a suitable curriculum policy. It has been reviewed effectively to facilitate equitable access to the curriculum for male and female pupils. Similarly, learning resources have been evaluated successfully to ensure they are suitable for co-education. They are appropriate to promote engagement for male and female pupils. Observations indicate that pupils are responsible and socially integrated across all ages, play well together, and are collaborative learners. Detailed schemes of work are used for children's learning in the early years. New schemes have been developed to enable three-year-olds to experience a wide range of learning opportunities, including literacy, numeracy, understanding of the world and child-initiated play in the newly developed outdoor learning areas. The school provides targeted interventions for children who have SEND which are based on their individual requirements. All pupils receive appropriate relationships education. Suitable plans exist for this to be expanded to accommodate the needs of three-year-olds, and those of female pupils throughout the school. The curriculum is likely to continue to meet the requirements with the introduction of pupils aged three and the proposed move to co-education.

Quality of education provided – teaching [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 3]

- 2.3 The school meets the standard.
- 2.4 The teaching staff are suitably qualified and experienced. Relevant staff have good knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the early years schemes of work. Lessons follow the detailed planning designed by senior leaders, and pupils were observed to be learning in calm and organised classroom environments. Teaching methods include effective behaviour management and suitable use of teaching resources. Teachers encourage child-centred play planned around personal stages of development, allowing pupils to progress appropriately at their own pace and level of ability. A suitably qualified and experienced teacher has been appointed to lead the early years from September. An appropriate new classroom has been created to accommodate three-year-old children. Staff have been trained by co-education specialists to support their transition to teaching female pupils. Teaching is likely to continue to meet the requirements with the introduction of pupils aged three and the proposed move to co-education.

Quality of education provided – framework for pupils' performance [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 4]

- 2.5 The school meets the standard.
- 2.6 The school has a suitable framework to assess pupils' performance, including those in the early years. The assessment framework used in Reception has been modified to suit assessment of the progress of three-year-olds. This involves suitable ongoing qualitative assessments to gauge their progress. Staff in early years record attainment and progress appropriately and communicate this to other staff and parents effectively. Suitable plans exist to extend this provision to meet the needs of three-year-olds. The assessment framework in place is suitable for male and female pupils and will enable staff to track any discrepancies in performance between genders. The framework for pupils' performance is likely to continue to meet the requirements with the introduction of pupils aged three and the proposed move to co-education.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [ISSR Part 2, paragraph 5]

- 2.7 The school meets the standard.
- 2.8 The school promotes an education that focuses on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of the pupils. It is based upon Jesuit principles, and an age-appropriate personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationship and health education programme which aligns to fundamental British values. Pupils experience the principle of democracy by secretly voting for student council representatives. Schemes of work have been reviewed effectively to include three-year-olds and the move to co-education. The school uses visiting speakers and an extensive educational visits programme to local faith venues to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of their diverse locality. Pupils are encouraged to take on responsibility as they move through the school and teachers use rewards and assemblies to celebrate success and build pupils' self-confidence and esteem. Pupils learn to distinguish between right and wrong, through scenario-based PHSE lessons, high expectations of behaviour and assemblies that focus upon social justice topics. Daily prayer and reflection are an integral part of the prep school form periods at the end of each day. This provides an opportunity for pupils to evaluate their own behaviour and contribution to others, and this is further enhanced by numerous opportunities to actively support local charities. Arrangements for SMSC are likely to continue to meet the requirements with the introduction of pupils aged three and the proposed move to co-education.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7]

Safeguarding policy

- 2.9 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.10 The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.

Safeguarding implementation

- 2.11 The school meets the standard.
- 2.12 The school implements its safeguarding policy and procedures effectively and consistently. This ensures that it supports pupils' individual needs at all ages, including in early years.
- 2.13 The safeguarding team has undergone the necessary training in accordance with the local safeguarding partnership procedures. Other staff are appropriately trained and are regularly updated to ensure they can fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities. Suitable training has been given to ensure that staff understand the safeguarding needs of female pupils and of children aged three. All concerns are recorded and referred appropriately to ensure there is effective oversight of pupils' wellbeing. The safeguarding team employs early intervention strategies and works closely with parents and external agencies to offer additional support. Child protection records are suitably detailed and stored safely.
- 2.14 The pastoral team works alongside the safeguarding team to provide individualised additional support for pupils' wellbeing. Pupils are taught to use technology safely and to be alert to potential online dangers. Monitoring and filtering of technology are effective.
- 2.15 Safeguarding records indicate that the school communicates and refers concerns effectively to external agencies. They confirm the pupils' response that they feel safe in school because they can access trusted adults who listen to their concerns, provide a response, and take appropriate action.
- 2.16 Staff understand the whistleblowing policy and know when and how to report concerns regarding colleagues or senior leaders. They know to contact the designated local authority officer (LADO) if their concerns are not addressed.

- 2.17 The governing body supports the pupils' wellbeing effectively through a committee structure which demonstrates the skills and knowledge necessary to implement an effective safeguarding policy. The governors are trained appropriately in safeguarding and the safeguarding policy requires appropriate recruitment checks of adults working with children. A nominated governor is in regular contact with the safeguarding team. The governing body monitors safeguarding suitably and holds senior leaders to account, while providing appropriate support. Leaders implement safeguarding procedures that are likely to continue to meet requirements if the material change request is granted and meet the needs of three-year olds and female pupils.

Premises and accommodation – toilet and washing facilities [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 23]

- 2.18 The school meets the standard.
- 2.19 The school has completed the building of additional toilets and washing facilities in early years and the main school buildings. These are suitable in number and quality to meet the needs of all pupils and provide separate facilities for boys and girls aged eight years and over.

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

- 2.20 The school meets the requirements for providing information relating to safeguarding to parents. Particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding are published on the school's website.

Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34]

- 2.21 The school meets the standard.
- 2.22 There is a suitably clear vision for the future development of the school, and leaders and managers have planned accordingly to educate children aged three. They have made suitable adjustments to provide an education that is suitable for male and female pupils. Governors maintain suitable oversight of policies and their implementation. They and senior leaders demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate for their roles so that the standards are met consistently, and they actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.

3. Recommendation with regard to material change inspection

Recommendation

- 3.1 It is recommended that the school's request to become co-educational throughout and lower the minimum age range to three years be approved. Planning for the changes is effective and most necessary steps to support the change have been taken already. Remaining actions are likely to be completed by September 2024.

4. Summary of evidence

- 4.1 The inspector held discussions with the head, senior leaders, and other staff members and met with a representative of the governing body. He visited different areas of the school and talked with groups of pupils. He scrutinised a range of documentation, records, and policies.