



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Handel House Preparatory School

November 2022

Contents

School's Details		3
1. Background Information		4
About the school		4
What the school seeks to do		4
About the pupils		4
2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection		5
Preface		5
Key findings		6
PART 1 – Quality of education provided		6
PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils		6
PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils		6
PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors		7
PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools		7
PART 6 – Provision of information		7
PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled		7
PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools		7
3. Educational Quality Inspection		8
Preface		8
Key findings		8
Recommendations		8
The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements		8
The quality of the pupils' personal development		10
4. Inspection Evidence		13

School's Details

School	Handel House Preparatory School			
DfE number	925 6023			
Address	Handel House Preparatory School The Northolme Gainsborough Lincolnshire DN21 2JB			
Telephone number	01427 612426			
Email address	admin@handelhouseschool.com			
Headteacher	Mr Mark Raisborough			
Proprietor	Mr Mark Raisborough			
Age range	3 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	51			
	EYFS	16	Juniors	35
Inspection dates	8 to 10 November 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Handel House Preparatory School is an independent co-educational day school. The school was established in 1850 and is situated in a residential area of the market town of Gainsborough, Lincolnshire. The school comprises two departments: EYFS for pupils aged 3 to 5 and juniors for pupils aged 5 to 11. It is a limited company; the proprietor, who is also the headteacher, took over the governance and financial management of the school in November 2020.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school aims to encourage a love of learning through personal, social and academic achievement which encourages responsibility to and for each other.

About the pupils

- 1.3 Pupils predominantly come from neighbouring villages within a 15-mile radius of Gainsborough. The school's own assessment indicates that the ability of the pupils is above average compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified five pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. No pupil has English as an additional language. Three pupils are identified by the school as particularly able, and the curriculum is modified for them.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report 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. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection 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. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management.

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 standards 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 relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 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 Pupils receive relationships education, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

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

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The school's safeguarding procedures are implemented effectively in most areas, including liaison with external agencies to meet the needs of those pupils at risk or in particular need. However, the school's recruitment arrangements do not pay sufficient regard to statutory guidance. Checks on staff have not always been carried out before staff begin work at the school. The school cannot show that it has consistently obtained and recorded references or prohibition from teaching checks as required.
- 2.10 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety in paragraphs 6 and 9–16, the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 (accessibility plan), and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met, but that in paragraph 7 [safeguarding] is not met.**

Action point 1

The school must ensure that appropriate checks of references and prohibition from teaching checks are undertaken prior to staff starting work [paragraph 7(a) and (b); EYFS 3.7 and 3.9].

Action point 2

The proprietor must ensure effective oversight of recruitment processes so that all required checks are both undertaken and also recorded in a timely manner [paragraph 7(a) and (b); EYFS 3.7 and 3.9].

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

- 2.11 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors reported under Part 4, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.12 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

- 2.13 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils’ medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.
- 2.14 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**

PART 6 – Provision of information

- 2.15 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes 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 any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school’s academic performance during the preceding school year, 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.
- 2.16 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.**

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.17 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.
- 2.18 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.**

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 2.19 The proprietor does not ensure that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.
- 2.20 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school in paragraph 34 is not met.**

Action point 3

The proprietor must ensure that those with leadership and management responsibilities use their skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively to promote the well-being of pupils and so ensure that the independent school standards are consistently met [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c)].

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

- Pupils demonstrate excellent communication, language and oracy skills.
- Pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes towards their learning.
- Some pupils' mathematical skills are not fully developed because there are insufficient opportunities for them to apply their skills of reasoning and logic in lessons.
- Pupils demonstrate information and communication technology skills that are at least sound and sometimes good.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.

- Pupils demonstrate high levels of self-esteem, self-confidence and self-awareness.
- Pupils respect and value diversity of society, showing tolerance and sensitivity towards each other.
- Pupils show considerable respect and consideration for each other and form productive relationships.
- Pupils confidently choose the way to work that suits them best.

Recommendations

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

- Ensure that all pupils learn in more depth about how to reason and explain their thinking in mathematics.
- Continue to strengthen pupils' ability to apply their information and communication technology skills to their learning across the curriculum.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

3.5 Children make a good start to their education in the EYFS. They develop a curiosity for learning and the skills they need to be successful and achieve well so that they are fully prepared for their next steps into Year 1. Work in pupils' books, learning in lessons and the school's own assessment information show good achievement and progress across the curriculum. This represents a notable

improvement over the past two years and is testament to the continuing focus senior leaders have placed on pupils' achievement. This is particularly evident in literacy, numeracy, science and modern foreign languages work. All parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that teaching, including any online provision, enables their child to make progress. All of the pupils who responded agreed that their teachers know their subjects well. There are no significant differences in the progress of different groups of pupils. The most able attain highly because they challenge themselves, each other and their teachers to explain and/or justify their thinking. Pupils with SEND are well supported in their learning by the quick identification and response to their differing needs. Pupils value teachers' feedback and understand clearly what they need to do to make good progress.

- 3.6 Pupils display excellent communication skills. Children in the EYFS use role play and story mapping to help them understand and retell a story. In Year 1, pupils listened attentively to a story and confidently searched for rhyming words. They develop a good knowledge and understanding of the sounds that letters make, so that by the end of Year 2 they establish secure reading skills. Teachers encourage children to mimic the correspondence between letters and sounds with clarity and purpose. As a result, they have a very clear understanding of the link between letter sounds, reading and writing. There has been a noticeable improvement in pupils' reading skills since the introduction of a new school initiative, where every pupil is encouraged to read each day. Older pupils read with fluency and expression, at levels that are above age-related expectations. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop excellent comprehension skills. They write with confidence and accuracy, producing high-quality writing for a range of purposes. This helps them to practise and refine the skills they have learned in English as well as to apply their broad vocabulary. In a Year 5 English lesson, pupils improved text by adding relative clauses and fronted adverbials. Year 6 pupils confidently applied the use of synonyms such as 'not enough' and 'insufficient' and identified prefixes to create opposites to specific words.
- 3.7 Pupils have mature and positive attitudes to learning. Classrooms are typified by hard work and focused, enthusiastic discussion. The family atmosphere of the school enables the pupils to feel safe, secure and ready to learn. Younger pupils willingly collaborate with each other, helping and encouraging their partners when they are struggling. Pupils of all ages are confident and positive young people who take their learning seriously. Older pupils take great pride in celebrating their own and each other's achievements. For example, Year 6 pupils collaboratively assessed each other's spelling tests, accepting the decisions made and reflecting on how they could improve next time. They know how to improve their learning using their green editing pens and are determined to do well.
- 3.8 Pupils exhibit good knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects. In the EYFS, children become curious and imaginative learners in response to indoor and outdoor activities, such as when excitedly finding snails on leaves. Year 1 pupils applied their reasoning skills effectively during discussions about words which sound the same in English. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 used their knowledge of rocks and soils when placing tiger worms into their own homemade compost bins. Similarly, these pupils worked with interest and enthusiasm to create chocolate soil when investigating different layers of soil. Pupils particularly enjoy their learning through a wide and diverse range of learning experiences, including art, science, technology engineering and mathematics (STEM) activities. Pupils benefit from a rich range of visits, most of which relate directly to their curriculum studies. For example when Year 2 visited the local heritage centre, during the inspection, to enhance their humanities work. Pupils value these greatly and each class thinks about their learning from the visits by preparing a portfolio of reflections and photographs. Pupils' learning and progress in modern foreign languages is excellent because they study a range of languages from a young age. Junior pupils demonstrated accurate pronunciation skills and good knowledge of vocabulary in French when identifying items of clothing. Older pupils demonstrated effective acquisition of vocabulary whilst engaging in a mixture of oral, aural and kinaesthetic activities. This was seen when Year 5 pupils demonstrated a good knowledge of Russian through well-presented work when using Russian vocabulary to describe Scunthorpe. In a Year 5 science lesson, pupils presented their knowledge and

learning to younger pupils about light and how to see, running string from their eyes to objects and creating human diagrams.

- 3.9 Younger pupils show strong numeracy skills and sheer enjoyment in numerical activities. In the EYFS, children make good progress from the recognition of numbers 1 – 5 to being able to count and apply use of numbers up to and above 10. By the end of their first term in school they confidently count 10 vehicles in a line and begin to explore numbers above ten. In Year 2, pupils confidently develop age appropriate reasoning skills to subtract numbers and record information, relying on fewer and fewer prompts to complete subtraction calculations. Older pupils know how to use a range of mathematical methods and calculation techniques and present these carefully in their books. They practise these regularly until they are securely committed to memory. However, their abilities to use and apply their reasoning skills to solve challenging problems, which test their thinking and enable them to record their ideas, are not consistently well developed in all years.
- 3.10 Pupils demonstrate good study skills. In Year 2 they confidently recall prior learning of numeracy and transfer this knowledge to subjects across the curriculum. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they use good working habits and effective classroom routines to engage with starter activities as soon as they enter their classrooms. This allows them to apply previous learning to new challenges and ensures effective learning takes place from the start of the lesson. Older pupils are able to find answers and use the appropriate tools to solve problems for themselves. For example Year 5 pupils think carefully and deeply about their work, particularly during project work in a range of activities, including STEM and modern foreign languages. They confidently assess each other's work when identifying strengths and weaknesses in their own and classmates' work.
- 3.11 Pupils demonstrate information and communication technology skills that are at least sound and sometimes good. They demonstrate good word processing skills and occasionally use presentation software to good effect. However, pupils have insufficient opportunities to gain good programming skills and capabilities in coding. Inspectors saw limited evidence, including in their books and classroom displays, of pupils applying their information and communication technology skills to learning across the curriculum. The school has plans in place to enhance this aspect of the curriculum.
- 3.12 Pupils take great delight in participating in the annual Christmas production. They spoke with enjoyment about the roles they played in the recent production of *The Wizard of Oz*. Year 5 and 6 pupils produce the school magazine using articles submitted by the whole school community. A number of pupils successfully enter young writers creative writing competitions receiving many achievement certificates with at least one pupil having their work published in the 2021 *Peculiar Pets* book. Pupils achieve good outcomes in national competitions, including bronze and silver certification in the national mathematics challenge. Pupils' individual talents are developed in a mutually supportive community, because they are comfortable in each other's company and are accepting of their individual differences. They enjoy representing the school in sporting tournaments such as mixed gender football, tag rugby and cricket. Pupils who show a talent in sport receive support and encouragement to reach very high levels of performance. Older pupils have successfully gained entry to the secondary school of their choice and the majority gain places in academically selective schools.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.
- 3.14 The pupils develop excellent self-knowledge, self-discipline and resilience. They demonstrate an understanding of how to improve their own learning and performance. This reflects the school's success in fulfilling its aim to encourage a love of learning through personal, social and academic achievement. Throughout the school, pupils feel valued as individuals and they are encouraged to become increasingly more self-confident. All parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that the school encourages their children to become more confident and independent. Pupils' achievements both in and out of school are celebrated in the weekly celebration

assembly, contributing to their high levels of self-esteem. The oldest pupils are mature, friendly and resilient young people, ready to embark on the next stage of their education. Those who spoke to the inspectors talked with passion about their ambitious plans for the future and how much their teachers help and support them.

- 3.15 Pupils' respect for diversity and cultural understanding is excellent. They are highly respectful of the different cultures and traditions within their community. Pupils spoke enthusiastically and knowledgeably to inspectors about the different faiths and festivals which they learn about and celebrate in school. All parents who completed the questionnaire agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that people should be treated equally regardless of their ethnicity, gender or religion. Male and female pupils mix well together at playtime and work well together during lessons. Pupils across all years are encouraged to take part in assemblies. Pupils of all ages and cultural identities value the opportunities provided to celebrate events together. Many talked with pride about wearing the crowns they had made during the Queen's platinum jubilee celebrations last year.
- 3.16 In many lessons, pupils choose the way to work that suits them best. For example, some pupils work independently while others discuss their ideas with partners or small groups. In the EYFS, children at the early stages of speaking were happy to share their developing vocabulary with adults because members of staff were supportive and valued their efforts. Pupils' decision-making skills develop well because they are encouraged to persevere, especially in STEM activities. Pupils who were challenged with designing a skyscraper evaluated and modified their designs to improve the finished product. In another STEM lesson, pupils made informed and thoughtful decisions about the design of shadow puppets, considering different options for light sources and surface colours. Pupils are not afraid of making mistakes and make good use of such opportunities to help themselves master their knowledge and skills. Pupils confidently decide to seek help whenever they are unsure. In Year 6 English pupils choose to use a thesaurus when choosing antonyms for a given set of sentences containing key words.
- 3.17 Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong from a very young age. All pupils who responded to the questionnaire said that the school expects them to behave well, and similarly all parents said that the school actively promotes good behaviour. Pupils understand and respect the behaviour systems of the school and their behaviour around school is at least good. At break and lunchtimes pupils are well-behaved and play with joy and enthusiasm. Pupils are smart, well-behaved and courteous. In corridors and cloakrooms, they smile and greet visitors and staff with warmth and pride. Pupils consider the thoughts and feelings of others and understand that their actions have consequences. Year 3 and 4 pupils produced a list of rules on how to treat other people's possessions, such as 'be careful with it' and 'give it back before being asked'. A very large majority of pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school teaches them how to build positive relationships. A small minority did not agree that pupils are kind and respect each other. However, inspection evidence from school records and pupil discussions did not support this view. The older pupils are excellent role models, acting as buddies to the younger ones. Their understanding of British values, including the law, helps them to make sense of their role in shaping the world around them, including in their local community.
- 3.18 Pupils' social development is good. In the EYFS, children settle into their learning quickly and socialise well. Pupils across the school socialise well and show respect for staff and each other. Year 6 pupils said that pupils look after one another and talked about the importance of helping a friend if they are angry. They explained how they are encouraged to resolve any differences in the playground and help others when they fall and hurt themselves. All parents who completed the questionnaire agreed that the school helps their child develop strong teamwork and social skills. Pupils support each other readily during lessons and they display a genuine care and concern for each other.
- 3.19 Pupils who spoke with inspectors talked with confidence and positivity about the school's community, saying that the school is like their second home. They make effective contributions on a daily basis through the support they give to each other. Pupils of all ages successfully fulfil a variety of roles as

classroom monitors, house captains and sports leaders. They take their areas of responsibility in the school seriously and wear their badges with pride. Pupils of all ages develop enterprise skills through fund raising activities for both local and national charities, such as in harvest festival week. They also perform regularly in the school choir at church events during religious festivals and at a local care home during the Christmas period.

- 3.20 The pupils' spiritual understanding and an appreciation of non-material aspects of life is good. Year 5 pupils who spoke to inspectors talked about the importance of doing something to support their well-being. Pupils celebrate many festivals throughout the year. For example, Ramadan, Diwali, Chinese New Year and St Patrick's day. They enhance their knowledge and understanding through visits to places of worship, such as a Sikh temple. All pupils participate enthusiastically in choral singing during assembly. This provides a positive start to the day. However, pupils do sometimes find it difficult to express and explain their understanding of the world in spiritual and philosophical terms.
- 3.21 Pupils' knowledge of how to stay healthy and safe is good, and their well-being is strongly promoted by the sense of calm and purpose which permeates across the school. They speak confidently, in an age-appropriate way, about how to keep themselves safe. Pupils who spoke to inspectors were particularly confident about how to stay safe when using new technology, especially when they are online. An overwhelming majority of parents and pupils, in the questionnaire, agreed that the school provides a safe environment to learn. The pupils bring in their own lunches and healthy choices are encouraged from the youngest children upwards. Pupils know how to look after their mental and physical health. In a Year 3 and 4 science lesson, pupils know about how to balance the different food groups and were encouraged to make healthy choices. Pupils are aware of the importance of exercise in maintaining a healthy lifestyle, responding positively to the school's emphasis on physical activity and regular opportunities for exercise. This was demonstrated by the enthusiastic approach that pupils exhibit in physical education lessons.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the proprietor and two members of the advisory board, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Desmond Dunne	Reporting inspector
Mrs Samantha Ransom	Compliance team inspector (Assistant bursar, HMC school)
Mrs Geraldine Yandell	Team inspector (Deputy head, ISA school)