



## **Material Change Inspection Report**

### **Handcross Park Preparatory School**

**November 2023**

## School's details

<b>School</b>	Handcross Park Preparatory School			
<b>DfE number</b>	938/6223			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	307038			
<b>Address</b>	Handcross Park Preparatory School London Road Haywards Heath West Sussex RH17 6HF			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01444 400526			
<b>Email address</b>	registrar@handxpark.com			
<b>Headmaster</b>	Mr Jonathan Besley			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Miles Templeman			
<b>Proprietor</b>	Newells School Trust			
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 13			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	408			
	<b>Day pupils</b>	356	<b>Boarders</b>	52
	<b>Pre-prep</b>	140	<b>Prep</b>	268
<b>Date of inspection</b>	23 November 2023			

# 1. Introduction

## Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Handcross Park Preparatory School is a co-educational day and boarding school. It is based on a single site near Haywards Heath in West Sussex. It is a member of the Brighton College family of schools. It is a charitable trust and is administered by a single governing body under the Newells School Trust. The school is organised into a pre-prep department for pupils aged two to seven, which includes an early years setting, and a prep department for pupils aged seven to thirteen. The school has 47 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities. None has an education, health and care plan. Forty pupils speak English as an additional language. The school's previous inspection was a focused compliance and educational quality inspection in November 2022. The school appointed a new headmaster in September 2023.

## 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 increase total pupil capacity from 408 to 500. The school plans for this to be an incremental increase, with implementation commencing from January 2024. The inspection focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs), the National Minimum Standards for Boarding 2022 and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 3, paragraphs 7 (safeguarding) and 8 (safeguarding of boarders); NMS 5 and 6	<b>Met</b>
Part 3, paragraph 11 (health and safety); NMS 9	<b>Met</b>
Part 3, paragraph 12 (fire safety); NMS 10	<b>Met</b>
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision of pupils); NMS 20	<b>Met</b>
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment); NMS 9	<b>Met</b>
Part 4, paragraphs 18-21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors); NMS 19	<b>Met</b>
Part 5, paragraphs 23-30 (premises and accommodation); NMS 4 and 7	<b>Met</b>
Part 6 paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	<b>Met</b>
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management); NMS 2	<b>Met</b>

## 2. Inspection findings

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding and safeguarding of boarders; boarders' possessions and provision of food and drinks [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 5 and 6]**

#### **Safeguarding policy**

- 2.1 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.2 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**

- 2.3 The school meets the standards.
- 2.4 Scrutiny of records, observation and discussions with staff and pupils indicate that appropriate safeguards are effectively implemented, including in the early years and for boarders. Those responsible for safeguarding hold positions within the school's senior management team. They have been appropriately trained and are suitably knowledgeable. There is regular sharing of information between the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), his deputies, and the other members of staff.
- 2.5 Governors provide effective oversight of the school's safeguarding processes. Together with the DSL they conduct the annual safeguarding audit. The audit is then subject to approval by the full governing body. The records of bullying, low-level concerns and any instances of child-on-child abuse are reviewed effectively and the safeguarding governor reports termly to the full governing body.
- 2.6 The safeguarding governor interviews pupils and staff during termly visits. He uses the discussions with pupils to check that they would know who to speak to if they have concerns and that they feel safe in school and online. In discussion with the inspector, boarders and day pupils reported that they are treated fairly by staff, that kindness, respect and tolerance characterise the school and that they feel safe. Pupils stated that they receive a response if they raise a concern and that action is taken if needed. Records of safeguarding confirm this to be the case.
- 2.7 Staff are suitably trained and discussions with them confirmed that this training has been effectively understood. In discussion, staff demonstrated a clear understanding of how to report concerns that they may have about other adults in the school and confirmed that they would do so if this were necessary. If a pupil were to make a safeguarding disclosure, staff know how to respond appropriately. There is an appropriate approach to reporting low-level concerns about adults working with children and a suitable record is kept. The school has appropriate arrangements for handling allegations, including reporting to local agencies.
- 2.8 There are effective procedures to ensure that appropriate and timely checks are made to confirm the suitability of staff. The appointment process is thorough and systematic and suitably detailed records are kept. Senior staff and the safeguarding governor check the single central register separately each half-term and the safeguarding governor checks a sample of personnel files termly.
- 2.9 Boarders are provided with suitable laundry arrangements where needed and adequate storage for their possessions. Arrangements for mealtimes are appropriate and boarders have suitable access to facilities to make snacks, and to drinking water.
- 2.10 These processes ensure the proprietor exercises suitable oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements. The arrangements are likely to meet the needs of the school if the proposed increase in pupil numbers is approved.

**Welfare, health and safety of pupils – health and safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 11; NMS 9]**

- 2.11 The school meets the standards.
- 2.12 The proprietor ensures that the school complies with the relevant health and safety laws by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy. Systematic records show that appropriate checks are conducted on a regular basis. Staff are able to report any concerns so that any trends in health and safety implementation can be identified and risks mitigated. The current arrangements indicate that the school is likely to continue to meet the standards if the pupil roll is increased.

**Welfare, health and safety of pupils – fire safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 12; NMS 10]**

- 2.13 The school meets the standards.
- 2.14 The school has a suitable fire safety policy. A fire risk assessment of the premises has been undertaken by a suitably qualified external consultant and any recommendations implemented. Procedures to be followed in the event of a fire are well understood by staff and pupils. Termly fire drills, including in the boarding house in boarding time, are carried out and recorded. The arrangements are likely to continue to meet the standards if the pupil roll is increased.

**Welfare, health and safety of pupils – supervision of pupils [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 14; NMS 20]**

- 2.15 The school meets the standards.
- 2.16 Pupils, including boarders, are appropriately supervised through the effective deployment of staff. There are sufficient adults available in boarding during the evenings and boarders have access to a member of staff if needed during the night. Additional staff, including in the boarding house, are due to be appointed in response to the planned increase in pupil numbers. Current systems for pupil supervision are suitable and likely to continue to meet the standards if the pupil roll is increased.

**Welfare, health and safety of pupils – risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16; NMS 9]**

- 2.17 The school meets the standards.
- 2.18 The school's risk assessment policy clearly describes the roles and responsibilities of staff in identifying and mitigating risk. It is implemented effectively. There is risk assessment training for all staff and additional training for those leading trips and visits. Appropriate and suitably thorough risk assessments are drawn up for all areas of the site, in-school activities, trips and visits. School leaders have risk assessed the proposed increase in pupil numbers effectively and all classrooms have been measured to ensure there is overall capacity in the school for 500 pupils. The arrangements are likely to continue to meet the standards if the pupil roll is increased.

**Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18–21; NMS 19]**

- 2.19 The school meets the standards.
- 2.20 There is a suitable policy which is implemented effectively to ensure required recruitment checks and procedures, including for supply staff, are carried out. All staff, governors and persons engaged in regulated activity are checked and the results are recorded appropriately on the single central register

of appointments. Those responsible for carrying out the required recruitment checks and the maintenance of staff records ensure that the necessary checks and evidence are in place prior to staff commencing work in the school. These arrangements suggest that the school is likely to continue to meet the standards if there is an increase in pupil numbers.

### **Premises and accommodation – [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 23-30; NMS 4 and 7]**

- 2.21 The school meets the standards.
- 2.22 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, showering facilities where required by the standard. Appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs is provided, including sleeping accommodation where necessary for boarders. Boarders' sleeping and social accommodation is suitable. Boarders have access, as appropriate, to local medical, dental and optometric services and to the relevant health agencies. Acoustics, lighting and water provision are appropriate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.
- 2.23 The school opened a new classroom block in September 2023. This provides an additional two classrooms, which will meet the needs of growing pupil numbers, disabled access and additional toilets. The school has suitable plans to enhance the boarding accommodation and increase capacity. These works, together with the current provision, are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the proposed increase in pupil numbers.

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

- 2.24 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; NMS 2]**

- 2.25 The school meets the standards.
- 2.26 School leaders and governors, including those with specific responsibilities for safeguarding and boarding, demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the independent school standards are consistently met, and the wellbeing of the pupils is actively promoted. Measures planned for the proposed increase in pupil numbers are suitable. They are likely to continue to promote the pupils' wellbeing.

### **3. Recommendation with regard to material change inspection**

#### **Recommendation**

3.1 It is recommended that the material change to increase total capacity to 500 pupils be approved.

## **4. Summary of evidence**

- 4.1 The inspector held discussions with the head, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with the chair of governors and another governor. He visited different areas of the school and talked with a group of pupils. He scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.