

Bryony School

Marshall Road, Rainham, Gillingham, Kent, ME8 0AJ

Inspection dates

24 January 2017

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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

- At the last inspection, leaders had not kept up to date with statutory requirements and ensured that pupils' welfare was promoted at all times. Systems and checks relating to the suitability of staff and risk assessments were not effective. The condition of the premises did not assure pupils' welfare, health and safety as far as is reasonably practicable.
- Leaders have acted promptly to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils. Wisely, they drew on the support of a local authority adviser to help them review and strengthen this aspect of the school's work. Checks on staff and risk assessments are now robust. Leaders have improved the parts of the premises that compromised pupils' safety.
- There is a culture of vigilance. In this small school, strong relationships between staff, pupils and parents ensure that pupils' welfare and safety is paramount. Staff appreciate the training that they receive to support this work. As a result, they know what to do if they are concerned about a pupil. Staff also know what actions to take if they are worried about the way a colleague or leader behaves.
- The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website. This takes into account the most recent government guidance and is fit for purpose.

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

- The junior school cloakroom is located in a cellar. Access to this is by steep steps. Inspectors found previously that leaders were not taking effective action to reduce the risks that this posed to pupils.
- Leaders have reviewed their risk assessment of the junior school cloakroom. They noted the need to make improvements to the lighting, the marking of steps, and to ensure that pupils are supervised at all times when using the cloakroom. Leaders have implemented all of these changes.
- There is a sufficient risk assessment policy and clear processes to manage risk in place for all aspects of the school's work. For example, staff are required to carry out daily premises checks and take action to ensure that pupils are not exposed to unnecessary risks. The policy also provides staff with some guidance relating to the evaluation of

whether a risk is acceptable. Staff know what leaders expect them to do to manage risk. However, the policy does not state clearly enough who is responsible for completing risk assessments or provide a precise timescale for the process.

- All standards that were checked for this part of the independent school standards are met.

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

Paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(c)(iii), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii) and 21(3)(b)

- At the last inspection, some checks relating to the suitability of staff and proprietors were not complete. The single central record of these checks did not comply with statutory guidance.
- Leaders have ensured that all of the required checks of staff and proprietors are now in place. The single central record contains all of the necessary information. Leaders keep this document under review to ensure that it is up to date and complies with the latest guidance.
- All standards that were checked for this part of the independent school standards are met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 24, 24(1)(a) and 24(1)(b)

- The location of the medical room at the junior school did not meet requirements at the last inspection.
- The medical room is now located on the ground floor. It is close to a toilet facility and has a wash basin. The medical room provides sufficient accommodation for the examination and treatment of pupils.

Paragraphs 25, 27, 27(a) and 27(b)

- The previous inspection highlighted that the premises on the junior school site posed some risks to the health, safety and welfare of pupils. Some lighting did not work or was insufficient. The steps to the cloakroom in the cellar were unmarked and pupils did not like to use the steps.
- The proprietor has made improvements to the premises on the junior school site. This work was rightly prioritised. As a result, the premises now meet the requirements of the independent school standards.
- The light switch in the Year 6 girls' changing room has been replaced. Pupils are now able to operate this light.
- Four additional external lights have been fitted on the junior school site. This ensures that there is sufficient lighting to the outside of the school premises.
- The cellar cloakroom has been repainted. It is now bright white. There is additional lighting. The proprietor has ensured that two damaged steps have been repaired. All steps have been painted with a bright yellow edging. Staff are required to supervise pupils' access to the cellar at all times. Consequently, pupils report that this cloakroom is 'much nicer and safer'.

- All standards that were checked for this part of the independent school standards are met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33, 33(g)

- At the last full inspection, the complaints policy did not meet one of the requirements set out in part 7 of the independent school standards.
- Leaders have reviewed the complaints policy and made some astute changes. It now states that a complaints panel will include at least one member who is independent of the management and running of the school. Leaders can explain how they will meet this requirement should the need arise.
- The standard that was checked for this part of the independent school standards is met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- The quality of leadership and management was judged to be inadequate at the last inspection. Leaders were not actively promoting the well-being of pupils. They did not demonstrate the skills and knowledge appropriate to their role to ensure that all of the independent school standards were met.
- Leaders rightly prioritised changes to the premises and safeguarding procedures. Staff support leaders well with this aspect of their work. They follow the new robust procedures to keep pupils safe. This has ensured that pupils' welfare is actively promoted.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have adopted a sensible approach to improving the school. They have worked closely with an external adviser to develop and implement an effective action plan. As a result, all of the independent school standards are now met. The action plan was rewritten after the Department for Education (DfE) rejected it. The new plan sets out clear milestones that enable leaders to keep planned changes on track and check the impact of their work.
- Leaders have made some valuable links with other local schools. For example, a teacher in the early years has recently visited a maintained primary school. This has helped her to identify and make some improvements to the outdoor area. Leaders rightly recognise that they can learn from other providers and use this to help them develop the school.
- Leaders have made some important changes to staff appraisal. Senior leaders have carried out some checks on the quality of teaching and learning. They have provided staff with some helpful feedback. Nevertheless, leaders have not yet set clear expectations for each teacher to promote further improvements to teaching and learning.
- The proprietor has taken steps to strengthen governance. Following advice, a new advisory board has recently been established. It is intended that this board should monitor the school's compliance with the independent school standards and oversee arrangements to promote pupils' well-being. However, this board has only met once and it is too early to see the impact of this work.

- All standards that were checked for this part of the independent school standards are met.

Statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage

- At the last inspection, the school did not meet the requirement to ensure that all staff working in the early years were suitable to work with children.
- Leaders have ensured that all required checks for the suitability of staff are in place. Consequently, the statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage are now met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets the following independent school standards

- The proprietor ensures that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and that such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)).
- The proprietor ensures that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified (paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)).
- The proprietor ensures the suitability of staff. No such person is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act where that person is or will be engaging in activity which is regulated activity within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 4 to that Act; no such person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction. The proprietor carries out appropriate checks to confirm in respect of each such person, their medical fitness and the person's right to work in the United Kingdom. In relation to each member of staff ('S') appointed on or after 1 May 2007, a check was made to establish whether S is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act; a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction; a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed (paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c)(ii), 21(3), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(b)).
- The proprietor ensures that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils (paragraph 24(1), 24(1)(a)).
- The proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured (paragraph 25).
- The proprietor ensures that the lighting in each room or other internal space is suitable, having regard to the nature of the activities which normally take place therein; and external lighting is provided in order to ensure that people can safely enter and leave the school premises (paragraph 27, 27(a), 27(b)).

- The proprietor ensures that where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school (paragraph 33, 33(g)).
- The proprietor ensures that leaders have sufficient skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently and that they fulfil their responsibilities effectively and actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)34(1)(c)).

School details

Unique reference number	118979
DfE registration number	887/6001
Inspection number	10022745

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Preparatory
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	190
Number of part-time pupils	10
Proprietor	Mrs D E Edmunds
Principal	Mr D Edmunds
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,593–£6,103
Telephone number	01634 231511
Website	www.bryonyschool.org.uk
Email address	office@bryonyschool.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	4–6 May 2016

Information about this school

- Bryony School is an independent day preparatory school in Rainham, Kent. The school caters for boys and girls between the ages of two and 11.
- The school is non-selective. It aims to provide every child with the best possible start.
- The school operates on two sites which are about two miles apart. The building at Marshall Road is a converted house in a residential area. It provides education for pupils between two and seven years old. This includes a pre-school class, a Nursery class and a Reception class that provide for children in the early years foundation stage.

- The second site at Meresborough Road is for pupils aged between seven and 11 years old. The building is a former farmhouse with additional outbuildings, situated in a rural area.
- There are no pupils with an education, health and care plan.
- Since the last inspection, the headteacher has changed his role and is no longer a proprietor of the school. His wife is now the sole proprietor and he is known as the principal.
- In December 2016, a new advisory board was established to provide challenge and support to school leaders.
- The last inspection of the school took place in May 2016. At this time, the school was judged to be inadequate.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- This was the first progress monitoring inspection. It was conducted without notice.
- Leaders submitted an action plan to address the failings identified in the last inspection to the DfE in July 2016. This was rejected.
- The inspector met with senior leaders and two teachers and spoke with a member of the new advisory board on the telephone. The premises on both school sites were inspected, along with a range of documents. The inspector also spoke informally with pupils at the junior school site.

Inspection team

Caroline Dulon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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