

Sycamore Hall Preparatory School

1 Hall Flat Lane, Balby, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN4 8PT

Inspection date

28 November 2023

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(2), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(h) 2(2)(i),

- At the schools previous graded inspection, in June 2022, leaders did not have a suitable personal, social, health education (PSHE) curriculum in place. Pupils were not supported to gain an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships through the relationships education delivered in the school.
- This inspection found that leaders have adopted a local authority PSHE scheme. However, leaders do not have the knowledge or understanding they need to implement this effectively. They have not accessed any appropriate training that enables them to deliver learning that encourages pupils to respect different families. Pupils continue not to be supported to learn about protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- Pupils confirm that they do not learn about protected characteristics. Leaders are not effectively preparing pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in modern Britain.
- These standards are not met.

Paragraphs 2A(1) and 2A(1)(a), 2A(1)(d)

- The school has not taken appropriate steps towards ensuring a well-sequenced PSHE curriculum. The schools' relationships and sex education (RSE) does not meet the DfE statutory guidance. Leaders are not delivering a PSHE and RSE curriculum that prepares pupils well for Year 7 and beyond. Although leaders have purchased some resources to support the delivery of their PSHE curriculum, these have not been effectively used. Puberty and reproductive health are not taught. Pupils continue not to learn about healthy relationships or how to be mentally healthy.
- These standards are not met.

Paragraphs 2A(1)(e), 2A(1)(f), 2A(1)(g)

- Leaders have not taken the required action with regard to the statutory guidance for the teaching of RSE in primary school. Leaders have published a separate written statement of their policy with regard to the provision of education. This is available on the website. Leaders consult with parents about their policy. Parents confirmed this during the on-site inspection.
- These standards are now met.

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

Paragraphs 5, 5(b), 5(b)(vi)

- In the school's action plan, shared with the DfE in January 2023, leaders stated that they would timetable weekly discussions during circle time to support pupils' understanding of protected characteristics and different families. During this inspection, the inspector found that the school's PSHE curriculum does not include adequate coverage of the protected characteristics. Pupils do not learn about different families or types of friendships through PSHE lessons or circle time. Pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain is not as well developed as it could be.
- These standards are not met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a)

- The last inspection found that while the safeguarding policy was comprehensive and complied with statutory guidance, in practice, leaders did not ensure that safeguarding is effective. Safeguarding issues raised at the previous inspection are not fully addressed. The school works closely with the local authority to improve arrangements, such as a signing-in book for visitors and ensuring that leaders develop a recording system for any safeguarding concerns. However, at the start of the inspection, the inspector gained entry onto the premises without being checked.
- Leaders receive regular safeguarding updates, such as amendments to Keeping Children Safe in Education. However, they are not aware of some of the signs of neglect and harm, such as female genital mutilation. They do not know who to report concerns to. Leaders' knowledge of statutory safeguarding requirements is not secure.
- Leaders do not understand the requirements of filtering and monitoring. There are no monitoring systems in place to check what content pupils may have viewed while online using the school's computers. The curriculum does not effectively teach pupils how to stay safe online.
- Prevent training was completed by the deputy headteacher during the last inspection. However, leaders are unaware that this must be completed by all staff.
- These standards are not met.

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

- Although this standard was met at the previous inspection, the outside space in its current state is far from ideal for use as a primary school. Leaders identify potential hazards and have written a suitable risk assessment to reduce these risks. However, while the risk assessment states checks have been made, they have not been effectively

implemented. For example, the risk assessment states that they will 'implement clearing up routines and inspection schedule' and ensure that there are weekly checks on play equipment. The pond within the school playground is not suitably covered to prevent potential drowning. Leaders do not make adequate checks nor regularly maintain the outside space to an acceptable standard to ensure the health and safety of pupils.

- These standards in paragraph 16 were met at the last inspection but are now unmet.

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

Paragraphs 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(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)(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(6), 21(7), 21(7)(a), 21(7)(b)

- During the last standard inspection, in June 2022, inspectors found that standards connected to part 4 of the independent school standards were met. This was still the case during this progress monitoring inspection.
- The local authority supports the school to ensure that leaders make careful checks on the suitability of staff that they employ at the school. The single central record is maintained.
- These standards were met at the last inspection and continue to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 25

- At the previous inspection, this standard was met. However, during this inspection leaders do not implement their risk assessments effectively. The outdoor area was not checked daily to ensure it was fit for use. The proprietor does not maintain the outside space to a standard, which ensures that pupils can safely access this outdoor space for physical education and outdoor recreation.
- This standard was met at the last inspection but is now unmet.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(a), 32(2), 32(2)(b)(i), 32(3), 32(3)(c)

- In the previous inspection, the proprietor and headteacher were not listed separately. How to contact the proprietor was unclear. Contact details have been updated on the school's website and this is now clear.
- The standards in these paragraphs are met.
- The school now meets all the previously unmet standards in this part.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- The school's action plan is not supporting leaders to meet these standards. Effective action has not been taken to address all the standards which were unmet at the time of the previous inspection. Furthermore, during this inspection, the inspector found some standards that were previously met are now not met.

- The school is working with the local authority to improve their safeguarding processes. However, leaders have not implemented some of the recommendations they have received. This includes areas in which school needs to improve that were highlighted during the previous standard inspection.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils' well-being is actively promoted. They do not deliver an effective PSHE curriculum that includes learning about the protected characteristics. All staff have not completed the prevent training.
- These standards remain unmet.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school has an accessibility plan that fulfils the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet 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, as set out in the annex of this report. 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.

School details

Unique reference number	106816
DfE registration number	371/6010
Inspection number	10297568

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	Other independent school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	16
Proprietor	Jane Spencer
Headteacher	Jane Spencer
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,400
Telephone number	01302 856 800
Website	www.sycamorehallschool.co.uk
Email address	sycamorehall@tiscali.co.uk
Dates of previous standard inspection	28 to 30 June 2022

Information about this school

- This school's previous standard inspection was from 28 to 30 June 2022. This was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008.
- Sycamore Hall Preparatory School is a non-selective independent school for boys and girls between the ages of two and 11 years.
- The school is located on the site of the proprietor's home.
- The proprietor manages the before- and after-school care for pupils attending the school.
- The proprietor is also the headteacher. Her sister is the only other full-time teacher. There is a full-time general assistant.
- Children in Reception are taught as part of the infant class.
- This school does not use any alternative provision.

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.
- The previous standard inspection took place on 28 to 30 June 2022 and the school was judged not to meet some of the requirements of the independent school standards.
- The registration authority required the school to prepare the action plan as a result of non-compliance with the independent school standards being identified on the previous standard inspection. This proposed action plan was found not to be acceptable on 3 April 2023.
- This was the first monitoring inspection to take place following this standard inspection.
- The inspection was conducted without notice.
- The inspector held meetings with the deputy headteacher. They discussed the action plan, schemes of work for PSHE and RSE and reviewed policies and the single central record. They spoke on the phone with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day.
- The inspectors toured the school with the deputy headteacher, looked at pupils' work and spoke with groups of boys and girls separately.

Inspection team

Jenny Thomas, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain un-met at this inspection

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in subparagraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
 - 2(2)(d) personal, social, health and economic education which-
 - 2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act[9];
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress; and
 - 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor-
 - 2A(1)(a) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with primary education at the school is provided with relationships education,
 - 2A(1)(d) in making arrangements for the purposes of paragraphs (a), (b) or (c), has regard to any guidance under section 80A of the Education Act 2002 that applies in relation to the provision of education by maintained schools,

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

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor-
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which-
 - 5(b)(vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act; and

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;

- 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
- 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

Standards that were met at the previous inspection, but are now judged to not be met at this inspection

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 16(a) 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
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if 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.

The school now meets the following requirements of the independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2A(1)(e) makes and keeps up to date a separate written statement of its policy with regard to the provision of education as required by each of paragraphs (a) and (b),
- 2A(1)(f) consults parents of registered pupils at the school before making or revising a statement under sub-paragraph (e), and
- 2A(1)(g) publishes a copy of the statement on a website and provides a copy of the statement free of charge to anyone who asks for one.

Part 6. Provision of information

- 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 32(1)(a) the information specified in sub-paragraph (2) is provided to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate;
 - 32(2)(b)(i) where the proprietor is an individual, the proprietor’s full name, address for correspondence during both term-time and holidays and a telephone number or numbers on which the proprietor may be contacted, or
- 32(3) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is–
 - 32(3)(c) particulars of the policy referred to in paragraph 2;

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