

# Conifers School

Egmont Road, Midhurst, West Sussex GU29 9BG

**Inspection dates**

4 July 2018

**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), 7(b)*

- At the time of the last inspection in November 2017, the proprietor and leaders had not complied with the latest safeguarding guidance and did not fully understand their responsibilities to keep pupils safe.
- Proprietors and leaders now ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met. They have a clear understanding of their responsibilities to keep children safe. The safeguarding policy adheres to current requirements and training has taken place for staff and governors.
- A designated senior member of staff now leads on all aspects of safeguarding. She is well trained and has quickly established good links with local agencies. The tracking of concerns has been strengthened and leaders now monitor the safety and well-being of pupils more effectively. Consequently, this standard is now met.

#### *Paragraphs 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 16(a)*

- At the time of the previous standard inspection, an up-to-date health and safety policy was not in place. The school's fire-risk assessment was out of date and remedial actions had not been completed. Although the school had a range of risk assessments for different activities at the time of the previous inspection, there was no formal risk-assessment policy.
- A health and safety policy is now in place. A member of staff has overall responsibility for all health and safety issues. The governing body provides very effective oversight of this important aspect of the school.
- The school has commissioned a full fire-risk assessment and has undertaken all recommendations within the suggested timescales. The school has committed to carrying out weekly, monthly, half-yearly and annual checks as required to ensure that fire-safety systems and processes are fit for purpose. A fire marshal has been appointed to lead on some aspects of fire safety.

- A new first-aid policy has been implemented. Appropriate first-aid training has been completed by six early years staff. This ensures that a first-aid qualified member of staff is now always on duty in the early years, as required by statutory guidance.
- The risk-assessment policy is now in place. It was drawn up by the new health and safety officer and is monitored regularly by the headteacher. School leaders have undertaken to review risk assessments regularly according to the new policy.
- At the time of the inspection in November 2017, there was not an up-to-date admission register that recorded all the information required by the Department for Education (DfE). Therefore, it was not possible to see at a glance when pupils had joined and/or left the school. Attendance registers were not kept up to date correctly by some teachers.
- A suitable admissions register is now in place and complete.
- Teachers now ensure that their attendance registers are up to date. However, the reasons for pupils' absences are sometimes not accurately recorded.
- As a result of the actions leaders have taken, this standard is met.

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

*Paragraph 20(6), 20(6)(b), 20(6)(b)(i), 20(6)(b)(ii), 20(6)(b)(iii), 21(6), 21(7), 21(7)(a), 21(7)(b)*

- At the beginning of the standard inspection in November 2017, the single central record of recruitment checks had many omissions and errors. Although the headteacher completed most of the necessary checks on staff during the inspection, one member of the proprietary (governing) body had not had all the required checks completed.
- The outstanding checks were carried out in December 2017 and recorded on the single central record.
- As identified under Part 3, the introduction of a new leader with responsibility for safeguarding has strengthened the supervision of safeguarding. Members of the governing body carry out regular checks to ensure that the single central record is complete and up to date. Consequently, this part of the standards is met.

#### Part 6. Provision of information

*Paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(c)*

- At the time of the last inspection an up-to-date safeguarding policy was not available on the school website, nor was a paper copy available for parents from the school office.
- A safeguarding policy that complies with the latest government guidance is now available on the school website. Paper copies of this policy are obtainable by parents from the school office. This part of the standards is now met.

#### Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- At the time of the last inspection, leaders had not ensured that the school met the statutory requirements for independent schools. The proprietors did not provide sufficient oversight of the school to ensure that the school met its statutory obligations. Too many areas of responsibility had been left to the headteacher.

- Leadership and management have significantly improved and these standards are now met. Additional leadership posts have been introduced. Early years, safeguarding and literacy now have dedicated leaders. These new leaders demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of their responsibilities. They have all improved the quality of the areas they are leading.
- The headteacher is more focused on her own areas of responsibility. She is working closely with the governing body to ensure that all aspects of the school improve.
- The governing body has improved its oversight of the school. It has given each governor responsibility for important aspects of health and safety and safeguarding, for example. The governing body is better informed about the school's current performance. Consequently, governors now have a much clearer understanding of how well they meet their collective responsibilities.

#### Statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage

- The learning and development requirements and the safeguarding and welfare requirements were not met at the time of the last inspection. Although leaders ensured appropriate staff-to-child ratios, they did not make sure that at least one member of staff in the setting had a current paediatric first-aid qualification. The overall judgement that safeguarding in the school was ineffective, with related unmet independent school standards, also applied to the early years provision.
- The learning and development requirements were not met because leadership of the early years was weak. No one made sure that pupils made good progress between the different class groups.
- Leaders have taken substantial actions to improve the early years foundation stage (EYFS). An important first step was the appointment of a suitably qualified member of staff to lead the EYFS. This new leader has acted quickly to strengthen children's learning. She has sought expert advice and guidance and made links with other local early years settings to learn from good practice elsewhere.
- Children in the EYFS are now making better progress. This is because teachers' planning is more effective. For example, the additional staff training in how to teach phonics is leading to children making greater progress in this area of their learning.
- The headteacher and governors have also taken steps to ensure that the statutory requirements are met. The actions to meet Part 3 above ensure that most aspects of the safeguarding and welfare requirements in the EYFS are now met. In addition, the actions taken to ensure that a member of staff with up-to-date paediatric first-aid training is always available in the setting fulfils the remaining welfare requirements. Further to this, leaders and governors have invested in expert support to help the EYFS leader plan and evaluate progress.
- The school now meets the statutory requirements for the EYFS.

## 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

#### Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that:
  - arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
  - such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State
  - relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy
  - there is compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
  - first aid is administered in a timely and competent manner by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written first aid policy
  - an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
  - the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy.

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

- The standard in this paragraph is met in relation to an individual ('MB'), not being the chair of the school, who is a member of a body of persons corporate or unincorporate named as the proprietor of the school in the register or in an application to enter the school in the register, if:
  - subject to sub-paragraphs (7) to (8), the chair of the school makes the following checks relating to MB:
    - where relevant to the individual, an enhanced criminal record check
    - checks confirming MB's identity and MB's right to work in the United Kingdom
    - where, by reason of MB's living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, obtaining an enhanced criminal record certificate is not sufficient to establish MB's suitability to work in a school, such further checks as the chair of the school considers appropriate, having regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State
  - the information referred to in this sub-paragraph is, in relation each member ('MB') of a body of persons named as the proprietor appointed on or after 1st May 2007,

whether the checks referred to in paragraph 20(6)(b) were made, the date they were made and the date on which the resulting certificate was obtained

- the information referred to in this sub-paragraph is, in relation to each member of a body of persons named as the proprietor in post on 1st August 2007 who was appointed at any time before 1st May 2007:
  - whether each check referred to in sub-paragraph (6) was made; and
  - whether an enhanced criminal record certificate was obtained, together with the date on which any check was completed or certificate obtained.

#### Part 6. Provision of information

- The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that:
  - particulars of the arrangements for meeting the standard contained in paragraph 7 are published on the school's internet website or, where no such website exists, are provided to parents on request.

#### Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 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:
  - demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
  - fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
  - actively promote the well-being of pupils.

#### Statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage

- Safeguarding and welfare requirements
- Learning and development requirements (apart from where there is an exemption in place).

## School details

Unique reference number	126118
DfE registration number	938/6072
Inspection number	10054907

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 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	102
Number of part-time pupils	43
Proprietor	Trustees of Conifers School Ltd
Chair	Mark Drysdale
Headteacher	Mrs E Smyth
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,110 to £9,450
Telephone number	01730 813 243
Website	<a href="http://www.conifersschool.com">www.conifersschool.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@conifersschool.com">admin@conifersschool.com</a>
Date of previous standard inspection	21–23 November 2017

### Information about this school

- Conifers is an independent day school for girls and boys aged from two to 13. The school is permitted to have up to 136 pupils on roll. There are very few pupils in Years 7 and 8 as this provision is relatively new.
- At the time of the previous inspection, there were very few pupils who had special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and no pupils who were disadvantaged.

- The proprietor is the Trustees of Conifers School. The body of trustees is also known as the governing body.
- Early years provision takes place in four separate classes organised by age, ranging from provision for two-year-olds to a Reception class. There are two classes for three-year-olds and those rising four.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The aim of the school is to 'foster a happy and stimulating environment in which each child can prosper academically, socially and emotionally'. The school also aims 'to prepare all children for their continuing education and enhance their awareness of the world in which they live, sending them on to their next school well prepared for the challenges ahead'.

## 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 not to comply with at its previous inspection.
- This inspection was carried out without notice.
- The previous inspection took place on 2 to 23 November 2017. It 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. This inspection found that the school did not comply with the independent school standards and other requirements.
- This was the first monitoring inspection.
- The registration authority required the school to prepare the action plan as a result of non-compliance with the independent school standards.
- The school's action plan was evaluated by Ofsted on 23 March 2018. The plan was accepted with some modifications.
- During this visit the inspector met with the headteacher, senior leaders and a member of the governing body. The inspector observed learning in the EYFS, looked at teachers' planning and children's work. A range of policies and procedures were considered, including the safeguarding policy and the fire-risk assessment.

## Inspection team

Phil Minns, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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