

School inspection report

3 to 5 December 2024

Chesham Preparatory School

Two Dells Lane

Chesham

HP5 3QF

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Chesham Preparatory School is an inclusive, happy community. However, leaders do not have sufficient oversight with regards to the timely implementation of statutory guidance. Leaders have not adopted the recent changes to the statutory attendance guidance or updated their attendance policy meaning that Standards in this area are not met.
2. Although all staff have had the mandatory recruitment checks required by the law, at the time of the inspection, there were a number of errors in the inputting of data into the single central record of appointments (SCR). These have now been rectified.
3. Leaders provide a curriculum where the arts, sciences and academic studies are highly valued. The extra-curricular provision is broad and inclusive covering crafts, sports, outdoor pursuits and stress relieving activities such as singing for wellbeing, yoga and birdwatching. Leaders, in keeping with the schools' aims, provide a 'kaleidoscope of experiences', which are widely available to pupils. These experiences enable pupils to discover their talents and strengths, and they foster a love of learning.
4. Teachers use a range of appropriate teaching methods to engage pupils in lessons, and pupils like to challenge themselves to make further progress. The clear marking policy is consistently used and enables pupils to understand their next steps for learning.
5. Clubs take place both before, after and during the school day, and they promote pupils' wellbeing by developing their confidence and collaborative skills. Leaders have carefully considered any unintended consequences for pupils who may not be able to take part by providing a range of free sporting and creative clubs that are run by the teaching staff. In the junior and senior school, fixtures are arranged so that every child in the class can take part. This enriched curriculum is a significant strength of the school.
6. Leaders have devised a suitable programme of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education including the appropriate teaching of relationships education for pupils. Pupils' mental and emotional wellbeing is supported through the development of positive relationships with staff and an emphasis upon kindness and care.
7. Leaders ensure that health and safety measures are robustly implemented and that pupils are well-supervised.
8. The school's safeguarding policy is detailed and consistently adhered to by staff. Leaders ensure that filtering and monitoring systems protect pupils from unsuitable content and that pupils have an understanding of online safety and how to navigate the internet.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are not met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are not met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are not met.

Areas for action

The proprietor must ensure that:

- the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge to
- fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met and
- they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils

so that:

- leaders give due regard to statutory guidance on attendance issued by the Secretary of State and have a clear up-to-date school attendance policy on the website which all leaders, staff, pupils and parents understand
- senior leaders monitor school policy and practice to ensure it meets up-to-date regulations regarding attendance, including use of the correct codes for maintaining attendance registers
- senior leaders regularly review records and track trends in pupils' attendance to promote pupils' wellbeing.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- develop effective oversight of the single central record to ensure its accuracy.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Governors and leaders work effectively together to ensure that pupils at the school are well-cared for and that the education that they receive is of a good standard. Leadership of the early years is robust, and governors have effective oversight of situational risks and understand how to mitigate them. Leaders largely demonstrate the skills and knowledge required to promote pupils' wellbeing. However, a lack of awareness of changes to the statutory requirements regarding attendance has meant that leadership in this area is not fully effective.
10. Leaders have not adopted the recent statutory guidance to promote pupils' attendance. This means that practice around tracking and looking for trends in attendance within the school does not ensure that attendance is given an appropriately high priority. A lack of oversight of the single central record by senior leaders means that some administrative errors were made. These have now been rectified.
11. The senior leadership team and the proprietor annually review the development plan to ensure that the school's aims and ethos are being actively promoted. Leaders prioritise the development of pupils' physical and mental wellbeing. Healthy lunches are provided each day, and pupils spend a good deal of time outside improving their fitness levels. The team of school counsellors are available to pupils during the day, should they need to talk to someone about their mental health, and a school nurse administers first aid in a timely manner.
12. Subject leaders play a pivotal role in ensuring the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Leaders observe lessons, review pupils' work and analyse data from assessments to address any gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Timely feedback is given by subject leaders to teachers to ensure teachers are meeting the needs of each child, and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning.
13. A detailed accessibility plan identifies and appropriately addresses the needs of pupils with disabilities and ensures that they can access the curriculum. Leaders ensure that the school meets its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and is reflective of an inclusive school where pupils' needs are well-catered for.
14. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding have established links with outside agencies to promote the wellbeing of pupils, and detailed records are kept of any safeguarding issues that arise, including when leaders decide not to refer to external agencies.
15. There are opportunities for staff development and training in safeguarding and leaders have appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding to identify and manage situational risks that are harder to spot.
16. Leaders identify risks to pupils' health and safety and mitigate them appropriately. Detailed risk assessments are completed by staff who have the appropriate skills to do so, and these are carried out appropriately. Thorough planning by leaders of educational visits and trips abroad addresses any risks to pupils' safety.
17. Suitable information is made available to parents and carers on the school's website, as required by legislation. The complaints policy is comprehensive and is followed appropriately in addressing any

complaints when they are made. Parents receive detailed reports twice per year informing them of pupils' progress and areas for further development.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

18. Standards are not met consistently with respect to leadership and management. As a result, not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

19. The curriculum is designed to be broad and challenging, incorporating both the required areas of learning and a well-developed range of additional activities.
20. Pupils acquire new knowledge in lessons as a result of the teaching which they receive. Teachers consistently understand the needs and aptitudes of each child in the class, and this enables pupils to make good progress from their starting points, particularly in core curriculum areas.
21. Teachers demonstrate appropriate subject knowledge and plan effectively. They use a variety of strategies to meet the diverse needs of their classes, including for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Planning includes tasks that will support and challenge those who have higher prior attainment, thus ensuring work is matched to the needs of pupils. Regular pupil performance meetings with middle leaders make use of formative and summative assessment information to track progress and provide additional support where necessary.
22. Teachers are aware of the needs of the few pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) and support is put into place when needed by the member of staff responsible for SEND and is carried out by the class teacher or teaching assistant as appropriate.
23. Leaders' emphasis on the importance of discussion, reflection and feedback in lessons helps to deepen pupils' understanding. Feedback to pupils is constructive and consistent across subjects and year groups. Teachers' marking makes clear what pupils have done well and what needs to improve. This has a positive impact on pupils' self-confidence and motivation to learn.
24. Children in the early years are provided with a range of stimulating activities that regularly take place outside, either in the outdoor learning area or in their designated outdoor spaces. The children display confidence and engage readily with adults. Staff hold high expectations for behaviour which helps to ensure that children are well-mannered and kind to one another. Language development is good owing to a strong focus on phonics and early reading that is delivered by well-trained staff. Children demonstrate their confidence during performances on stage and celebrate the achievements of their peers.
25. Pupils in the older years are taught by skilled secondary specialist teachers in many subjects including science, art and design technology. Teachers' secure subject knowledge helps to equip pupils well for their transition to senior school. Pupils are well-cared for and the varied programme of physical activities available to pupils enables them to maintain high levels of fitness. The team of teachers, who are qualified as counsellors, work alongside the school nurse to ensure that pupils' emotional and physical wellbeing is prioritised across the school. Targeted praise by teachers and weekly celebration assemblies nurture pupils' self-esteem.
26. Teachers provide more challenging work across the curriculum for those who have mastered the learning intentions set by the teachers. 'The Enthusiast' pages posted on the school's online platform encourage pupils to take on extra challenges beyond the classroom. Staff regularly review and refresh the educational provision to ensure that pupils are acquiring new knowledge, making good progress and are individually challenged.
27. Teachers try to find ways to relate learning to real-life situations. For instance, in Year 4 science lessons, pupils learn about different professions that involve scientific research, such as research

carried out by food scientists. Pupils then perform their own experiments in the science lab using iodine to identify starch in different foods. Correct scientific language and methods are used, and pupils are able to accurately predict outcomes and analyse their results.

28. The humanities enquiry-based projects successfully develop pupils' independent study skills. The curriculum equips pupils well for their future lives by encouraging them to be self-motivated and to think and learn for themselves. Leaders have created a positive learning environment. Pupils are polite, well-behaved and have a mature approach to learning.
29. Pupils' performance is shared with parents via detailed written reports and consultation meetings. Detailed information about children in the early years is shared with their parents on a regular basis.
30. As pupils progress through the school, teachers encourage them to become increasingly independent in art and design technology. Once pupils have been taught a skill, they can design and create their own work. As a result, pupils are confident to use different mediums including painting, textiles, clay and silk printing and produce pieces that are original and expressive. At the end of the year, pupils' creative work is entered for an art and design and technology exhibition and the proceeds of the sale go to a local animal sanctuary. In this way, pupils' work is valued and celebrated.
31. Pupils are encouraged to join the various bands and choirs, and the senior choir performs regularly in concerts and festivals at both local and national level and these experiences help to develop pupils' social, creative, and emotional skills.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

- 32. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

33. Pupils' wellbeing is considered across many areas of school life. Leaders' focus on providing pastoral care in which each individual is known, valued and nurtured, is in evidence at lunchtimes, in assemblies, during playtimes and PSHE lessons. Pupils learn to treat others how they would expect to be treated and they are tolerant and respectful. The older pupils demonstrate kindness and care for their younger peers.
34. The relationships education curriculum is appropriately delivered and is taught through form times, as part of PSHE lessons, in assemblies, and in science for the older pupils. The teaching of relationships education is in accordance with statutory guidelines and takes into account the ages of the pupils.
35. Teachers use praise and encouragement and pupils behave well, share generously, and show positive attitudes towards each other. The pupils regularly discuss the importance of kindness, and weekly assemblies focus on positive behaviour traits.
36. Pupils readily use the class 'worry monsters' if they feel anxious and, if they are worried about something, they are confident that there is a trusted adult to talk to. Staff pass on any concerns to leaders who act effectively.
37. Daily healthy lunches, where pupils select from a wide range of foods, including from a salad bar, help to encourage pupils' healthy eating. This is combined with an extensive and inclusive programme of sporting opportunities before, during and after school that contribute to keeping pupils fit and well.
38. Pupils from Nursery to Year 6 have a varied and inclusive physical activity programme and there is a focus in the lessons on developing physical fitness, social interaction and team-building skills. The physical education (PE) and games curriculum includes sports such as cricket, football and hockey, and incorporates many other disciplines including swimming, gymnastics, dance and athletics. There are two games lessons each week for pupils from Years 3 to 6 where every pupil is able to take part in fixtures against local schools. Leaders of the PE department are focused on ensuring the provision is inclusive and pupils participate readily in lessons and in competitive sport.
39. In the early years, the high adult to child ratios ensure that children have lots of attention and they are cared for effectively and supported well in their learning. Well-qualified teachers and support staff welcome pupils warmly into school each day. Staff encourage positive relationships and pupils display mature social skills.
40. Pupils are well supervised. The premises and classrooms are well maintained. First aid is administered promptly by the school nurse or by trained first aiders. In the early years, all staff have up-to-date paediatric first aid qualifications.
41. Health and safety precaution measures are implemented rigorously in accordance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order. Pupils know what to do in the case of a fire. Regular fire drills are recorded appropriately, staff are adequately trained and fire precautions are in place. The premises is well maintained and risks are identified and addressed in a timely and effective manner.

42. Pupils listen respectfully, and their behaviour in lessons and around the school is positive. Pupils understand the rewards and sanctions policy, which staff apply consistently. Bullying is rare and when it occurs, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff.
43. Through assemblies, art, music, drama opportunities and outdoor learning experiences, pupils develop an appreciation of the aesthetic aspects of life, and their work that is displayed throughout the school reflects this well.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

All the relevant Standards are not met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

44. Senior leaders and teachers facilitate opportunities for pupils to share their ideas and to contribute to the school and the wider society. For example, the setting up of an eco-council was suggested by the pupils themselves and is now an active and positive force in the school. Year 6 prefects take time out of their breaks to collect materials from classrooms to take to the recycling bins and they offer suggestions to leaders in the regular council meetings as to how the school can become more eco-friendly.
45. The school offers a wide range of clubs throughout the school day from bush craft, birdwatching, and swim club to British Sign Language club, that enable pupils to explore interests and passions whilst developing new skills and knowledge. Pupils benefit from opportunities to collaborate with teachers and contribute positively to the school community. Year 6 prefects play an active part in the daily life of the school. They listen to children reading in early years classes, perform various duties around school and can lead clubs to help others. Pupils are able to suggest ideas for clubs that they would like to run and, where appropriate, leaders support their decisions by enabling them to do so. For instance, the doodle and board games clubs were initiated by pupils in Year 6 to support those younger than themselves who might find social interaction more difficult.
46. Pupils in Year 6 are encouraged to demonstrate responsibility and are rewarded with 'role model' badges in celebration assemblies.
47. Teachers carefully plan opportunities for collaborative learning, as seen in Year 1 hockey where pupils learn paired dribbling drills. Pupils often demonstrate cooperative skills and show respect for each other, their ideas and opinions.
48. Special events support the promotion of British values throughout the year. There is a whole school approach to inclusion and diversity. For instance, the school celebrates Black history month by focusing upon art and history, and in science pupils learn about influential male and female scientists. The reading scheme and library books have recently been updated with books that reflect a more diverse and inclusive family life, and in international week pupils take part in several activities that celebrate their cultural heritage.
49. There are regular discussions in PSHE, religious education lessons and in assemblies about why people should respect one another and these messages are supported by displays throughout the school.
50. Pupils have a mature understanding of democracy, and the school holds a parliament week every two years that helps them to do so. During parliament week, each class in the senior school becomes a constituency. Pupils enjoy being able to debate with one another and share their own views. In the early years, children vote on which story will be read by the teacher at the end of the day.
51. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils quickly learn what is right and what is wrong and they behave appropriately.

52. Leaders organise meetings for parents to discuss senior school choices from Year 4 onwards. Pupils are well supported in preparing for their next schools. Pupils in Year 5 take part in an annual enterprise fair and there is a 'future schools' evening every two years, where parents and pupils can meet representatives from local secondary, grammar and independent schools.
53. Pupils receive appropriate guidance on economic education through the PSHE curriculum where they learn about financial literacy at an age-appropriate level. For Founders Day, for instance, the older pupils take part in a competitive enterprise fair where they put their skills into practice and run their own stalls. They plan the costing, marketing and equate their own profit margins in mathematics lessons. Pupils learn how to apply what they learn in real life situations, for example, pupils in Year 4 learn to recognise coins and solve money problems.
54. In Years 5 and 6, pupils take part in enrichment days and a series of talks and workshops that introduce them to a range of careers and they help to equip them for their future lives.
55. Pupils regularly compete at local and occasionally at national level in a number of activities, including singing, drama, swimming, athletics, cross-country and snow sports (skiing).
56. The school is currently working with the Woodland Trust and pupils are helping to plant trees to create a new orchard and a natural willow hedge. Pupils consider the impact their actions have on the wider community and on the world.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society.

57. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

58. The school culture supports a commitment to promoting a caring learning environment for its pupils. However, senior leaders' knowledge and understanding of legislative requirements does not demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of statutory attendance guidance. Leaders have not implemented recent attendance guidance. Leaders had not updated their policy or practice. Attendance levels are therefore not monitored or tracked in accordance with new government legislation. As a result, leaders are not well informed to offer adequate support to families with potential absence concerns.
59. Admission registers are well maintained. The school notifies the local authority of pupils who leave and join the school at non-standard transition points. A record of leavers' destinations is carefully maintained. The new attendance codes were not being used. Admissions and attendance records are backed up daily on the school electronic system.
60. The safeguarding policy, which includes the regulatory requirements, is updated at least annually and is available on the school's website. Staff receive regular updates when necessary and staff induction for all new staff is conducted by the safeguarding lead.
61. Safeguarding concerns, including those for online safety and radicalisation, are recorded, reported, and addressed swiftly. Any serious incidents that occur are referred to the appropriate external body. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding record any incidents where a referral does not meet the threshold for referral to external agencies. Senior leaders review and adapt school practices after incidents have occurred.
62. Pupils are taught about online safety and the curriculum coverage in PSHE and information and communication technology lessons is highly appropriate. Pupils understand how to stay safe online. Filtering and monitoring systems employed by the school are effective in preventing access to inappropriate online content.
63. Staff, governors, volunteers and contractors undergo appropriate safeguarding recruitment checks, but there were some errors in inputting data into the single central record. These were rectified during the inspection to reflect the safeguarding checks that were completed.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

64. The standard in this paragraph is not met. The proprietor has not ensured that regular data analysis is monitored and analysed to both identify patterns and trends and deliver support to pupils and families as set out in the statutory guidance in *Working together to improve school attendance*, August 2024.

Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.

Schedule of unmet Standards

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

The following standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR ¹ Part 8, paragraph 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 wellbeing of pupils.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 15	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

Safeguarding

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 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
7(b)	such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

¹ The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('ISSR')

School details

School	Chesham Preparatory School
Department for Education number	825/6027
Registered charity number	310642
Address	Chesham Preparatory School Two Dells Lane Orchard Leigh Chesham Buckinghamshire HP53QF
Phone number	01494 782619
Email address	pa@cheshamprep.co.uk
Website	www.cheshamprep.co.uk
Proprietor	Chesham Preparatory School Ltd
Chair	Mr Ben Cartledge
Headteacher	Mr Jonathan Beale
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	371
Date of previous inspection	28 September to 1 October 2021

Information about the school

65. Chesham Preparatory School is an independent co-educational day school, for pupils aged between three and 11 years. It is located in Buckinghamshire, close to Chesham and Berkhamsted. The school was founded in 1938 and moved to its current site in 1941. The school is a registered charity, with a board of governors who provide proprietorial oversight. The current headteacher has been in post since 2017.
66. The school has a pre-preparatory department, which caters for Nursery and Reception age children. The preparatory department is split into juniors (Years 1 to 3) and seniors (Years 4 to 6).
67. The school has identified 36 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
68. The school has identified three pupils as speaking English as an additional language.
69. The school states its ambitions are to provide exceptional learning and a kaleidoscope of experiences that make a lifetime of difference. The school aims to: inspire every child to discover what is amazing about them and each other; nurture a lifelong love of learning in a stimulating and happy environment and equip every child to reach for their potential.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

3 to 5 December 2024

70. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

71. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussion with the chair of governors
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

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