

School inspection report

25 to 27 June 2024

Brambletye Preparatory School

Lewes Road

East Grinstead

West Sussex

RH19 3PD

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'.

Contents

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS	3
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....	4
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS	4
SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	5
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE	6
SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	7
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	8
SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	9
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	10
SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....	11
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY	12
SAFEGUARDING	13
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING	13
SCHOOL DETAILS	14
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	15
INSPECTION DETAILS	16

Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders at Brambletye have the necessary skills and experience to ensure the promotion of pupils' wellbeing. In the school's diverse community, leaders support pupils' individual needs. Leaders deliberately keep the core aims of the school simple so that they are known and understood by even the youngest pupils. Leaders emphasise kindness as a key value.
2. The school has a broad and inclusive curriculum, delivered through well-planned lessons. The quality of teaching and pupils' progress are monitored regularly. As a result, pupils make good progress. They benefit from guidance by their teachers who are supportive and who have secure subject knowledge. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make progress alongside their peers. Further embedding of the strategies to support them within lessons would help pupils who have SEND to learn more successfully.
3. In the pre-prep school, including early years, teaching staff keep a close eye on how successfully pupils learn. They use this information to plan future learning experiences that match pupils' needs. Pupils develop their skills quickly in language and communication as well as in a range of other areas, learning both inside and outside the classroom.
4. Leaders have established a culture of mutual respect and pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are polite and keen to engage in conversation, confidently answering questions. The relationships between pupils are positive and in line with the school ethos of caring and being kind to others.
5. The relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum is well designed and helps older pupils to be prepared for life beyond the school. The RSE programme is shared with parents and the right to withdraw their children is explained. An effective skill-tracking system records pupils' self-evaluations and highlights topics that they need to revisit. Leaders' careful planning ensures that age-appropriate content is taught in all year groups.
6. Leaders of boarding have established a setting which is welcoming and comfortable. However, there is a disparity between the quality of the recreational spaces provided for the younger and the older pupils. Pupils who board are given opportunities to meet with boarding leaders so that they can share any worries or concerns. Boarders play a full part in shaping and strengthening their boarding experience.
7. The curriculum supports pupils' economic education appropriately. Pupils acquire insight into business planning and budgeting, developing skills which will benefit them as they seek to contribute to society in this area. Older pupils receive careers guidance through the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme and from external speakers, including parents. However, there is a need for a clearer strategy that connects and builds on the strands of the careers provision so that pupils are supported more effectively in their future decision-making.
8. Leaders have established an effective safeguarding culture. Staff across the school have a clear understanding of their responsibilities for safeguarding and that it is everyone's concern. Their training is up to date, and they know how they should report any allegations, including low-level concerns.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are 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 met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that strategies to support pupils who have SEND are applied consistently during lessons across the curriculum to promote pupils' progress
- develop the recreational spaces provided for younger and older boarders so that they are comparable in quality
- design and deliver a clear programme for careers education, advice and guidance that supports older pupils to make informed choices about their future careers.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders and governors have a well-developed understanding of the many aspects of wellbeing and this is included in every aspect of the school's work. Wellbeing is promoted through the curriculum and the supporting activities, from the management of boarding to the robust safeguarding culture.
10. Curriculum leaders maintain a thorough oversight of teaching so that pupils follow a well-structured curriculum which promotes their good progress. Leaders identify any necessary improvements through their systematic monitoring and take action quickly and effectively.
11. Leaders maintain an effective oversight of boarding provision so that systems and procedures are thorough and appropriate. Induction for both new boarders and new boarding staff is supported by careful documentation and record-keeping. Boarding staff receive clear guidance and training so that the boarding experience for the pupils is positive and responsive to pupils' needs.
12. Leaders in early years and pre-prep have created a setting where the youngest pupils are able to make good progress because the curriculum is interesting, relevant and based on pupils' interests and needs. A range of creative scenarios along with specialist teaching in subjects such as French and music means that pupils have a wide range of learning experiences in which to develop their knowledge and skills.
13. Leaders evaluate the impact of the school's provision effectively. They consult widely and draw up detailed audits for different aspects of the school's work. The school development plan accurately targets the identified areas for further work. Leaders are swift to put the necessary adjustments in place.
14. Governors and leaders ensure that the school fulfils its requirements under the Equality Act 2010. An appropriate accessibility plan is in place and is implemented to ensure that both the school facilities and the curriculum are accessible to all members of the school community. Staff effectively identify and modify the school's site where this is required. The accessibility plan is externally audited and details the school's commitment to equality of access and its readiness to adjust provision as required.
15. Safeguarding leaders have successfully established a culture of 'it could happen here' which is to the benefit of pupils' safety. Staff are well trained and confident, so they know what to do should an incident occur. Leaders' commitment to safeguarding is reflected in the increased size of the safeguarding team alongside governors' sustained and detailed oversight of safeguarding matters.
16. The school's aims are clearly understood across all year groups such that from the youngest children upwards, pupils confidently explain why it is important to 'work hard, play hard and be kind'. This core purpose of the school is very much at the heart of the lived experience of every pupil, from kindness leaves on the tree in the pre-prep to the awarding of a 'pink' by older pupils.
17. All necessary information is provided to parents. This includes statutory policies, reports on their children's progress and a wide range of other information that gives parents a good understanding of the school's direction and its values. The school's suite of policies is clear and detailed. Leaders make sure these policies are put in place. They check the impact of these practical documents and make any necessary adjustments. Parents are fully informed of any developments in the school's

provision in line with the school's ethos where the wider school community work together for the good of pupils.

18. Leaders work well with external agencies to secure pupils' safety and wellbeing including with the local authority support services from four different counties. Leaders inform the appropriate local authority and share the required information when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times. Where a pupil is wholly or partly funded by a local authority an annual account of income and expenditure is provided to that authority by the school.
19. Leaders and governors understand risk. Staff are trained in risk assessment and how to mitigate this. They are confident to determine the acceptable level of each risk. Staff know pupils well and this enables them to identify risks that are connected to pupils' individual circumstances.
20. A clear and effective complaints policy is in place. The number of formal complaints is low, but the policy is followed closely when needed. Record-keeping is appropriate, as is the process for reflection which follows any complaint.
21. The governing body is in close touch with school leaders. The governing body ensures that it is fully informed about the school's work through regular visits, reports to governors' committees and focused interactions that include leaders, members of the pastoral team and pupils. Governors have the experience and understanding to both support and to challenge leaders' decisions. Governors are committed to resourcing the promotion of pupils' wellbeing, such as is seen through the recent expansion of the safeguarding team and in the increased range of therapeutic and counselling support available for pupils.

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

22. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

23. Leaders have designed a broad and relevant curriculum which supports pupils to develop their knowledge and skills over a range of subjects. Teaching staff adapt how they teach the curriculum to meet pupils' different needs. Teaching plans are well structured so that pupils, including the youngest children in early years, build on their previous learning productively. Pupils are encouraged to develop their resilience and independence. They make informed decisions about their own learning, such as when they select from a choice of activities to practise things they have found challenging. In early years learning activities often stem from children's interests. This motivates children to develop their confidence and keep trying as well as learning key subject content.
24. Leaders and teaching staff routinely check how well pupils learn. The information they collect shows that pupils typically make good progress from their starting points. Teachers are quick to provide additional support when pupils do not make expected progress so that pupils do not fall behind. Equally, where pupils are ready for more challenge, teachers provide more complex tasks that deepen pupils' learning. The assessment framework is supported by careful marking of pupils' work, internal examinations, written reports and parents' meetings.
25. Teaching approaches are varied and include shared discussions and interactive activities so that pupils acquire new knowledge and learn from each other. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are well developed. Pupils are supported by their teachers to reflect on what they have learned and to express their ideas confidently. In PSHE lessons, Year 1 pupils explore the impact of litter on ocean pollution. Pupils work well together by sharing resources and helping each other to complete tasks. For example, in science Year 7 pupils work together and use problem-solving strategies to build models of a lung.
26. Teachers' secure subject knowledge in mathematics enables pupils to make good progress in lessons, including activities where pupils demonstrate real-life applications of mathematical processes such as probability.
27. Pupils, including those in the pre-prep, make good progress in modern foreign languages (MFL) owing to the engaging use of the target language. Bilingual pupils benefit from an adapted curriculum which supports their higher-level acquisition of the language. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress alongside their peers because of tailored support during lessons. This includes help with subject-specific vocabulary, guidance from a specialist teaching assistant and extra interventions outside of lessons.
28. Pupils make good progress in their scientific knowledge and understanding by applying what they have been taught to practical tasks that engage pupils and motivate them to learn. Pupils in Year 2 develop their knowledge of natural history and physics by building beaver dams and checking the efficiency of their structures by pouring water over the dams.
29. Pupils show well-developed talents in aesthetic and creative subjects. Leaders and teachers identify and track pupils who demonstrate sustained effort and progress. This informs scholarship decisions and encourages pupils to be aspirational in their artistic pursuits. Pupils' work is widely displayed around the school which inspires pupils to achieve further success.
30. Pupils who have SEND are effectively identified and appropriate support is in place such as a system of pupil passports that highlight pupils' specific needs. However, leaders and teachers need to make

sure that during lessons, pupils who have SEND are provided with the personalised support they require to learn successfully and achieve well.

31. Leaders provide a broad range of activities for pupils in both the pre-prep and prep schools. As a result, pupils develop their wider skills and understand the different ways to work and play constructively with others. The school supports pupils with talents in particular areas such as sport and music by providing opportunities for pupils to have specialist guidance both within school and externally that extend their skills and talents. Pupils relish further challenges such as participating in national athletics events.

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. Leaders have shaped Brambletye as an inclusive community. Leaders and staff model how to be respectful and kind. Pupils of different ages mix freely and develop many friendships owing to systems such as the lunch time seating plans which introduce pupils to new faces each term. Assemblies regularly refer to British values and the importance of respecting difference. Pupils often organise and lead assemblies where they focus on relevant issues such as 'having a voice when disabled'. From these experiences and further teaching in PSHE, pupils learn to be empathetic young people and to appreciate the diverse world to which they will contribute.
34. Pupils learn to think spiritually through attendance at chapel services and assemblies where they can take time to self-reflect. The school's rural setting means that learning outdoors forms an essential part of its provision. Pupils from the youngest upwards learn to explore and appreciate their natural surroundings.
35. Pupils develop self-confidence through leaders guiding them to new experiences. The curriculum and learning opportunities build and extend pupils' confidence and self-esteem. For example, in design and technology (DT), pupils in Year 7 move from 2D to 3D modelling so that additional challenges provide inspiration and lead to their impressive portfolios of work. Year 3 pupils help their younger peers when moving to a new year group and Year 8 pupils enjoy positions of responsibility. This helps pupils to develop personally and socially, as well as increasing their respect and understanding for others in their community.
36. Leaders are committed to providing high-quality provision in physical education (PE) so that pupils' physical health and emotional wellbeing are promoted. Pupils benefit from a daily physical activity programme. The premises and accommodation for physical education are appropriate so that pupils enjoy a broad and wide-ranging spectrum of activities.
37. In early years, a comprehensive programme of physical, personal and emotional activities encourages children to develop and acquire new skills. Activities such as 'stay and play' sessions give children opportunities to use the school environment and outdoor areas, as well as provide stimulating creative opportunities including outdoor art.
38. Pupils behave well. Behaviour management in lessons is consistent and effective. Pupils are clear about the system of sanctions and rewards for positive and negative behaviours. Crystals and jewels are used as incentives in the pre-prep and stars and minuses are used in the prep school. These are awarded for acts of kindness as well as hard work. Leaders monitor any patterns of misbehaviour and take action to address any emerging issues.
39. Bullying incidents are rare. Should a bullying incident be reported, it is quickly and appropriately dealt with and recorded in detail, with ongoing support provided for all parties involved.
40. Throughout the school, the premises and accommodation are well maintained so that pupils participate in a busy educational experience safely. Leaders are conscientious and take an active approach to all aspects of health and safety, including fire safety so that the wellbeing and safety of all members of the community is supported.

41. Boarders' accommodation is spacious and comfortable. Boarding pupils of all ages value the outdoor spaces which are used for a rich programme of activities. However, there is a notable difference between the recreational space provided for older boarders and the more limited space offered to the younger boarders.
42. Supervision of pupils outside lessons is carefully mapped out to ensure appropriate coverage of the six available locations, called zones. Within this system, pupils enjoy a flexible approach regarding where they play and are supervised effectively. Supervision of boarders is equally robust. A sufficient number of staff contribute every evening to the full boarding experience so that all areas are closely and effectively supervised.
43. Admission and attendance procedures are suitable, and registers are completed following statutory guidance. Leaders regularly track pupils' attendance and act swiftly if there are any concerns.
44. Well-trained staff are readily available if any pupils feel unwell or need first aid. The medical centre is well equipped and staffed throughout the day. Medical and first aid systems are appropriate. Clear records are maintained regarding accidents, illness and the administration of medicines.
45. Boarders are supported by an appropriate independent person who visits regularly so that boarders can seek counsel and advice should they experience anxiety. Alternatively, boarders know how to seek support with more privacy, should they wish to do so. The school establishes clear expectations and communicates with parents and guardians in a timely manner. Boarders feel well supported and well looked after by educational guardians who understand the importance of their role.

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

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

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

47. Pupils understand British values because curriculum leaders make sure that these are threaded through many subject teaching plans, for example in history and mathematics. Curriculum leaders check that these values are taught effectively. Pupils are able to talk about British values from their own experiences.
48. Pupils are prepared for life in modern British society owing to an emphasis in the curriculum on acquiring a wide skill set which equips pupils to manage many situations beyond school. These skills range from presentation skills to demonstrating empathy with those whose situation is very different from their own. The human and social focus of the curriculum supports pupils to acquire skills which will serve them well throughout life. Children in early years have a stimulating range of activities to develop their social skills. They quickly become adept at turn-taking, sharing and working with each other.
49. Pupils engage fully in charitable activity. They vote each year for the main charity to support. Year 1 pupils visit a local care home to perform assemblies and take in work to show residents. Well-established fund-raising initiatives focus on organisations both close to home and overseas. Pupils raise funds through events from triathlons to donating their work for art auctions. In Year 4, pupils' understanding of budget, costs and profit is also developed through their active participation in an entrepreneurial event. This event benefits the school's chosen local charity, supporting young children suffering financial hardship.
50. Pupils appreciate cultural diversity. Fortnightly lunches celebrate different cultures as selected by pupils. They are taught to value and further understand multi-cultural society. Visiting speakers are invited to assemblies to share their life experiences, for example representatives of the Windrush generation. This promotes pupils' empathy and understanding of the global society to which they belong. Leaders of all subjects ensure their curriculum teaching plans take account of diversity and difference. For example, in history, resources are carefully selected that specifically promote the contribution of world cultures.
51. Pupils understand right from wrong because they are taught fairness and justice as part of the PSHE programme and other curriculum subjects. Pupils have opportunities to explore and test their understanding and ideas against those of their peers through debating in lessons and during tutor periods.
52. Pupils are given a variety of roles such as prefects and house captains that encourage them to be responsible and empathetic to others both in and out of school. In the pre-prep, pupils are proud to represent their classes on the student council. Older pupils form focus groups where they identify areas within the school for change and development. Pupil engagement is good because leaders respond positively to pupils' opinions and implement reasonable proposals. For example, the recent changes to improve the seating arrangements to accommodate more pupils comfortably in the chapel. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to become familiar with current topics, such as the Earth Day activity where Year 8 pupils promote environmentally friendly projects.
53. Older pupils are taught about careers through a variety of focused lessons, talks by visiting speakers and visits to London and elsewhere. The PSHE programme includes a research task where pupils

select attributes that may suit their future career choices. That said, there is a need to draw these strands together in a more coherent and logical careers programme so that pupils build their knowledge and understanding of career options more successfully and this enables them to make well-informed decisions relating to their future careers.

54. A well-planned programme of events such as the Year 2 transition day and the Year 8 leavers' programme means that pupils are equipped to approach the next stage of their school journey with confidence and positivity.

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

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

Safeguarding

56. Governors and leaders have established a positive safeguarding culture across the school. Governors oversee and monitor safeguarding through the work of the nominated safeguarding governor who visits the school regularly. In addition, reports to committees and other meetings between governors and staff ensure that governors are clearly informed about the impact of the school's safeguarding systems.
57. The safeguarding policy is detailed and regularly updated to respond to changes to statutory guidance.
58. All staff receive regular and appropriate training which includes responding to different scenarios so that staff consolidate and apply the knowledge acquired during their training. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and the deputies receive regular high-level training; as a result, they are confident to respond to any incident.
59. Pupils, including children in early years, understand who they should turn to if they have a concern. They know that there is a range of adults available to support them including the independent person for boarding who is well known to boarders.
60. In the boarding provision, policies, related documentation and record-keeping sit within well-developed systems and processes so that boarders feel safe and secure within their house.
61. Pupils learn how to stay safe online because of focused and regularly updated teaching. The school's filtering and monitoring system is effective in alerting pastoral staff to any concerns about online activity including outside of normal school hours.
62. Leaders of safeguarding work with external agencies effectively. They consult as required with several local safeguarding partnerships and manage the challenge of the different systems effectively, acting on advice in a timely fashion. Safeguarding records are detailed and make clear reference to the timelines involved in managing each incident.
63. All required recruitment checks are made before staff or governors begin work at the school. Checks are recorded in detail and accurately in the school's register of appointments. Personnel files are well maintained. Staff trained in safer recruitment are involved in all appointments.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Brambletye School
Department for Education number	938/6251
Registered charity number	307003
Address	Brambletye School Lewes Road East Grinstead West Sussex RH19 3PD
Phone number	01342 321004
Email address	headmaster@brambletye.com
Website	www.brambletye.co.uk
Proprietor	Brambletye School Trust Limited.
Chair	Mr Nick Perry
Headteacher	Mr Will Brooks
Age range	2–14
Number of pupils	341
Number of boarding pupils	96
Date of previous inspection	19 May 2021

Information about the school

65. Brambletye School is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged 2–14. It was founded as a boys' school in 1919 and became co-educational in 2000. The school has been located on its 140-acre site outside East Grinstead since 1933. Since the last inspection, a new chair of governors has been appointed in November 2021, a new deputy headteacher in September 2023 and a new head of the pre-prep school in January 2024.
66. The school has one mixed boarding house for pupils in Years 3 to 8, located in the main school building.
67. There are 62 pupils in the early years foundation stage which comprises three Nursery classes and two Reception classes.
68. The school has identified 73 pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very small proportion of pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
69. English is an additional language for 42 pupils.
70. The school's aims for its pupils are 'work hard, play hard, be kind'. It has four key values: 'love of learning, sense of community, sense of self and looking beyond ourselves'.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

25 to 27 June 2024

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

72. 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
- discussions with the chair and other 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
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

73. 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**.

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