

School inspection report

12 to 14 March 2024

Clayesmore Preparatory School

Iwerne Minster

Blandford Forum

Dorset

DT11 8PH

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. The newly structured leadership team work together effectively to promote the education and wellbeing of pupils successfully. Governors and leaders demonstrate suitable knowledge, skills and understanding in fulfilling their responsibilities. Governors ensure that leaders are held to account for the quality of the school's offer through effective oversight and appropriate challenge.
2. Leaders plan the curriculum so that pupils achieve well across a wide range of subjects. The curriculum is supplemented by an extensive and well-resourced extra-curricular programme known by the school as LEX. The range of activities contributes positively to pupils' wellbeing because it excites and engages them to develop their interests.
3. Pupils learn and make good progress in line with their ability. Teachers know their subjects well. They use resources that are matched carefully to the content that they want pupils to learn. Teaching is highly effective in the creative and technological subjects. Pupils plan, design, create and engineer an array of creditable products and artwork.
4. Pupils' work and performance is evaluated regularly. However, there are some inconsistencies in how pupils' work is assessed by teachers and how well the quality of teaching and learning is monitored across the school.
5. Arrangements for pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are rigorous and successful. The relationships and sex education (RSE) programme is effective. Consequently, pupils behave respectfully towards one another and to staff. Bullying is rare and dealt with effectively by staff when it occurs.
6. Pupils' social and economic education is planned effectively and supports their positive contribution to society. Teachers provide suitable guidance and resources in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, tutor time and assemblies. Pupils appreciate and respect equality and diversity. They are well prepared for the next stage in education, including in their understanding and appreciation of British values. They build a sense of citizenship through engagement with the wider community such as when supporting a local garden project.
7. The required checks are made on the school's premises. Appropriate measures ensure that risk is well managed so that the environment is as safe as possible for staff, pupils and visitors. Health and safety procedures are implemented in accordance with relevant legislation and guidance.
8. Arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective. All staff, including the designated safeguarding leads (DSLs), are appropriately trained to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities. Governor training ensures that they are updated on the latest guidance and any changes to the requirements. Governors participate in the safeguarding monitoring group. They support staff in developing and implementing effective systems and controls to help safeguard pupils.

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 the assessment of pupils' work, including application of the school's marking and feedback policy, is timely and implemented effectively.
- Ensure that lessons across all age groups and subjects are consistently well planned and delivered so that teaching and learning is appropriately matched to pupils' needs and prior attainment.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders have the appropriate skills and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities effectively to ensure that standards are met. The leadership team is in a transitional phase as the school is no longer a discrete entity. Leaders work cohesively and for the most part effectively. Governors challenge leaders, through sub-committee and board meetings to continue to improve the quality of education. Their challenges help to identify where leaders' strategic approach requires further strengthening. For example, in a recent education committee meeting, governors questioned the reporting of progress in the lower years and interrogated leaders regarding the quality assurance of subject teaching and assessment.
10. The school's aims are successfully promoted. Pupils are ambitious and develop confidence and compassion. They appreciate that the high-quality extra-curricular programme encourages the development of these traits.
11. The broad curriculum embodies the school's core values in promoting mutual respect and tolerance between pupils. It is supported by effective teaching through which pupils successfully acquire knowledge and develop their skills and understanding successfully. Leaders' planning ensures themes of diversity and inclusion, for example, contribute effectively to pupils' understanding and help to foster a culture of respect and empathy in the school's community.
12. Schemes of work take account of checks on pupils' learning and achievement. Where checks identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills, leaders take swift action. For example, in implementing strategies to improve identified aspects of teaching and learning in writing and mathematics. Leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning across all year groups and subjects routinely. However, the planning and delivery of lessons is not entirely consistent across all year groups and subjects.
13. The pupils' wellbeing lies at the heart of leaders' decision-making. There is close oversight and careful monitoring of pupils' health and wellbeing. Leaders know the pupils well and keep a close eye on information to help identify individuals who may be struggling. They analyse records to identify any patterns or trends so that pupils get the support they need.
14. Leaders act to identify, manage and mitigate risks. They are conscious of potentially hidden risks such as negative social media influences. Teaching ensures that pupils learn about healthy lifestyles and are made aware of risky behaviours such as the dangers of vaping.
15. Provision for boarders creates a homely environment. The house is comfortable, organised efficiently and staffed effectively. Boarders' needs are well catered for.
16. The school has an appropriate accessibility strategy and fulfils its duty under the Equality Act 2010. For example, through the effective adjustments made to meet the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to enable them to access the curriculum fully.
17. Communication with parents is effective. The school provides relevant policies and procedures through its website and these are also available from the school office. Complaints are recorded and managed in accordance with a suitable policy.

18. Governors receive appropriate training. They visit the school regularly, engage with the views of pupils and staff, and maintain effective oversight of the school's policies and procedures.

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

19. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

20. The curriculum is planned to promote pupils' progress across a wide range of subjects. Detailed schemes of work are implemented so that pupils develop linguistic, mathematical and scientific skills broadly in line with their age and aptitude. In art and design technology (DT), planning and teaching enables pupils to demonstrate good progress in acquiring high quality technological, aesthetic and creative skills. The opportunities provided by the extra-curricular programme enable pupils to refine these skills further. Pupils lead projects to develop items such as wind turbines, geodesic tents and remote-controlled robots using the skills acquired through the curriculum teaching. Timetabled outdoor learning for pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 promotes their personal development and problem-solving skills.
21. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge. They employ a wide range of resources adeptly. Open-ended questions are used skilfully to promote and develop pupils' thinking skills. In most lessons teachers meet their pupils' needs well through careful planning. Typically, this takes account of all recent checks on pupils' learning. Planned activities use a range of well-matched, good quality resources so that all pupils learn well. For example, in a year 8 English lesson pupils showed their appreciation of Shakespearean text as they responded to skilful and timely questioning about their reading. In some lessons however, resources are not as consistently well-matched to pupils' prior attainments and needs.
22. Assessment is used by leaders to effectively measure pupils' progress and attainment. Pupils generally make good progress in accordance with their ability. However, in some subjects, feedback to pupils is not consistently in line with the school's policy. This means that pupils sometimes lack any indication of how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve.
23. The provision for pupils who have SEND is carefully planned and implemented according to individual pupils' needs. Detailed information is shared with teachers who tailor support and resources effectively so that these pupils make good progress.
24. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are appropriately supported to develop their English speaking and reading skills. A small number of pupils who speak EAL receive additional tuition so they can access the curriculum effectively.
25. Pupils, staff and parents acknowledge the benefits of the wide-ranging activities programme. Pupils' skills and experiences are broadened and deepened through learning in different contexts and participation in interesting pursuits. They enjoy frequent opportunities to access these during the week and most pupils opt to join in on Saturdays. Pupils are enthusiastic about this provision. They appreciate the life skills that they gain as a result.
26. Boarding staff ensure that a comprehensive programme of activities is available for pupils during the evenings and at weekends. Boarders choose activities that they enjoy such as art, Lego, chess, radio-controlled cars and table tennis. In the evenings boarders can choose between a range of physical activities, use the computer room and library, or relax in comfortable lounge areas.

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

27. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

28. Pupils' wellbeing is prioritised. Pupils and staff use the school's rural setting advantageously, for example, outdoor walks during tutor time being used to provide opportunities for mindfulness. This has a positive impact within classrooms as pupils settle into their work efficiently. They communicate with each other effectively in a supportive community characterised by mutual respect. Staff help pupils to develop self-confidence and self-esteem through praise and by recognising achievement in and out of the classroom. For example, pupils' efforts are rewarded through the Clayesmore Compass badge, which is awarded for positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are encouraged to show consideration through self-reflection and communication, including by listening to others. Pupils take pride in their achievements and the commendations they receive in assemblies. These awards are acknowledged warmly by their peers.
29. Pupils know they have someone they can talk to if they are concerned. They have tutors, senior leaders, a counsellor and boarding house staff as well as access to independent listeners and national support phone lines. Specialist staff in school help pupils who need emotional support. This is provided to groups or individuals as with the academic support programme. Pupils appreciate the support they receive for their physical and mental health and the security this provides.
30. The PSHE and RSE curriculums are appropriate and well delivered under the umbrella of PSHRE lessons. The scheme of work is wide-ranging. Teaching focuses securely on promoting pupils' personal development. Through PSHRE, religious studies (RS) and other areas of the curriculum, pupils develop their appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. Pupils are helped to extend their spiritual awareness. For example, in Year 7 RS, pupils' discussions about the concept of sacrifice deepened their understanding of value beyond material wealth.
31. The physical education (PE) curriculum and extensive sports programme encourages pupils to be physically healthy, as well as developing their fitness and physical dexterity. Pupils participate enthusiastically and express appreciation for their sporting opportunities. They welcome recreational activities, such as walking in the surrounding countryside, or playing board games that promote their positive mental health.
32. Pupils are well supervised. They are confident that teachers acknowledge and appreciate their positive behaviour and will impose suitable consequences for misconduct. Within this nurturing environment, pupils can contemplate their actions, recognising that making errors is a natural part of the learning process. As a result, they feel supported, valued, and understood. Pupils know that their peers accept and embrace cultural, racial and social differences and do not tolerate bullying.
33. The boarding house is well structured and ably run. It provides a relaxed and supportive environment in which boarders feel physically and emotionally secure. Boarders feel heard and valued as their opinions are actively sought. Effective role modelling by staff helps to promote the mutually respectful relationships that exist between boarding staff and pupils. Meals provided are of high quality with varied dietary choices that cater for pupils' requirements.
34. The school premises are well maintained. The required health and safety and maintenance checks are implemented effectively. Appropriate precautions are taken to reduce the risk from fire. Pupils

evacuate the building efficiently in termly drills, including during boarding hours for boarding pupils. Staff receive regular fire safety training. An appropriate fire risk assessment is in place.

35. Arrangements for pupils who are unwell or who require first aid are well supported, including through a health and wellbeing centre shared with the senior part of the school. Staff receive suitable first aid training regularly.
36. The school's admission and attendance registers are maintained appropriately. Any unexplained absences are followed up swiftly. Absences are tracked to identify patterns and trends so that pupils who may face challenge or lack of progress in their learning receive suitable support. Staff transfer child protection files and information appropriately to destination schools of leavers in accordance with statutory guidance. Reports to the local authority are made when pupils join or leave at non-standard times.

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

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

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

38. The curriculum and teaching are suitably planned so that pupils gain an understanding and appreciation for people, cultures and the environment in accordance with the school's aims. Teachers incorporate relevant social issues into lessons to promote this. For example, when studying filtration in science, pupils showed their understanding of the need to provide clean water to less well-developed regions, while considering the health and financial implications. Extra-curricular activities include a model United Nations unit. Participating pupils meet in a local school to discuss their given countries' approach to environmental and other issues such as child poverty.
39. Teaching encourages pupils to understand and celebrate their own culture and to gain respect for others. Pupils in Year 3, for example, thoughtfully discussed diversity and inclusion when considering the family unit in their PSHE lesson. Year 5 pupils learning to develop printing skills in art were immersed in the culture of India, referencing religion, myths and the playing of sitar music. Pupils in the boarding house enjoy sharing and celebrating the festivals and foods of their own cultures.
40. Across subjects, curriculum plans allow pupils to develop their economic understanding. Examples include pupils learning to use spreadsheets to manage financial information as part of the information and communication technology (ICT) curriculum. Small allocations of money for day trips encourage the youngest pupils to use their budgeting skills effectively. Pupils in Year 7 are practically challenged with their financial management when keeping to constraints while buying an appropriately healthy lunch from a French market. Pupils are encouraged to develop business enterprise. Year 8 pupils, for example, have picked their own strawberries to create a variety of produce for sale. Pupils manufacture items in the DT room during their extra-curricular programme and in their own time. They calculate profit and cost and subsequently market their products, donating the funds to charity.
41. The school's aim for pupils to contribute and show empathy and social responsibility is reflected in pupils' enthusiasm to select and support charities. On a local scale, this includes helping in a community garden. Pupils readily accept responsibility and are keen to help others. For a large cross-country event held at the school, older pupils not competing undertook roles such as marshalling. They likened their role to that of essential volunteers at events such as the Olympic games.
42. Pupils are well prepared for their future lives. Pupils develop an insight into careers through visiting speakers and a careers fair where Year 8 pupils interact with practitioners from a range of professions. Boarding pupils take responsibility for their possessions, daily organisation and activities such as cooking which help with their preparation for later life. Pupils gain an understanding and show respect for British values including law and democracy. Notions of right and wrong are explored through investigations of the justice system. These are reinforced through comparisons to law-and-order management for example, in Victorian times in Year 4, and in the Georgian period in Year 5. Older pupils' learning is developed well through studying party political manifestos selected to ensure a balanced perspective. Pupils invent their own party, create a motto and write its manifesto.

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

43. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

44. Leaders prioritise safeguarding and make effective arrangements to promote the welfare of pupils. Policies are drawn up appropriately and are implemented consistently. The establishment of the safeguarding monitoring group, which consists of senior academic and non-academic staff, leaders, and governors, ensures that safeguarding matters are given high prominence. The group meets regularly to discuss and review safeguarding matters and is proactive in establishing safeguarding systems and controls.
45. Safeguarding measures and checks are applied rigorously. All written risk assessments include safeguarding considerations. Actions apply to the whole school including boarders. Appropriate additional measures are applied to the boarding house and boarding staff.
46. DSLs are well trained and knowledgeable. They communicate effectively with external agencies when concerns or the need to make referrals arise. Record-keeping is thorough and meets requirements. The detailed information allows for deeper analysis and identification of any trends so that any necessary action is taken.
47. Staff receive appropriate training when they join the school. This is updated at regular intervals. Staff are confident in their understanding of child protection procedures and how to report concerns.
48. Leaders understand the risks pupils face on the internet. They ensure that staff are trained to equip pupils with appropriate knowledge to manage risks. This is reinforced by visiting speakers so that pupils, for example, know how to stay safe online.
49. Pupils, including those that board, feel that school is a safe and secure place with someone they can talk to. Details of supportive agencies and independent listeners are easily accessed by pupils.
50. The school implements appropriate procedures with regard to children missing or absent from education.
51. Those responsible for recruiting staff across the school have appropriate skills and knowledge. All the requisite pre-employment checks are rigorously completed for staff, boarding staff and governors. A suitable record of appointments is appropriately maintained which reflects the content of the personnel files.
52. Governors maintain effective oversight of the school's safeguarding policy and procedures, including the filtering and monitoring of internet usage. They monitor safer recruitment practices and scrutinise the register of appointments. Governors are well informed through termly meetings, visits to the school and an annual safeguarding audit.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

53. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Clayesmore Preparatory School
Department for Education number	835/6028
Registered charity number	306214
Address	Clayesmore Preparatory School Iwerne Minster Blandford Forum Dorset DT11 8PH
Phone number	01747 813111
Email address	headpa@clayesmore.com
Website	www.clayesmore.com
Proprietor	Clayesmore School Limited
Chair	Mr John Andrews
Headteacher	Mrs Jo Thomson
Age range	7 to 13
Number of pupils	132
Number of boarding pupils	43
Date of previous inspection	2 to 3 October 2019

Information about the school

54. Clayesmore Preparatory School is a boarding and day school for male and female pupils. The school is part of a charitable trust overseen by a single governing body. Since the previous inspection the pre-preparatory department has closed. The school is a part of Clayesmore School, for pupils aged from 7 to 18 years, led by the head with a recently re-structured leadership team.
55. Boarders from Year 3 to Year 8 are accommodated in one boarding house. There are separate wings for male and female pupils, with shared recreational facilities.
56. The school has identified 34 pupils with SEND. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
57. English is an additional language for 14 pupils.
58. The school states its aims are: to support and challenge pupils to fulfil their potential and contribute to the world with confidence, ambition and compassion; for pupils to develop a lifelong love of learning with skills, understanding and values that will equip them to be well prepared for their future lives; to instil a sense of appreciation, wonder and a respect for others and our environment.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

12 to 14 March 2024

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

60. 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 vice-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.

61. 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

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