

# School inspection report

14 to 16 May 2024

## **St Peter's Preparatory School**

Harefield

Lympstone

Devon

EX8 5AU

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 school is well led with a bold and innovative approach to school development. Leaders' vision for a forward-thinking school embraces an aspiring and positive attitude to learning, whilst instilling the core values of courtesy, consideration and common sense. To achieve this, leaders have created a curriculum that includes many opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and skills outside of the classroom. This broad and rich curriculum offer is available to everyone, including the youngest children, and has a demonstrable and positive impact on pupils' outcomes.
2. Pupils achieve a high number of academic, sporting, musical and artistic scholarships every year. This is the result of the extensive programme of extra-curricular activities, the comprehensive system of pastoral care, and the St Peter's School baccalaureate programme. This broad provision for pupils' personal development, is a significant strength of the school.
3. Senior leaders are well supported by the proprietor and the board of reference who ensure that leaders have the skills and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Subject leaders are given the right training to take responsibility for their subject specialism. Subject leaders use a robust system to check the quality of teaching and learning in their subject. Where any weaknesses are identified, senior and subject leaders make the necessary changes to the curriculum to improve the provision for pupils.
4. Teaching is delivered by well-qualified and dedicated staff who work together to teach the curriculum consistently. In the lower school, and especially in the Nursery and Reception classes, children's individual needs are carefully met. Parents are quick to praise the teachers who know their children well and help them to make good progress. On occasions, in the upper school, teachers do not plan and teach lessons that closely match pupils' different needs. When this happens, some pupils do not learn as successfully as they should.
5. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) value the specific support they receive. This helps them to make at least expected progress with their learning. Leaders re-named the 'learning support' they provide for pupils, to 'learning success'. This has a positive impact on pupils' perception of the help that they receive. The very few pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are well supported with teaching that is adapted to meet their individual needs.
6. Leaders and staff place a high priority on pupils' wellbeing. Leaders promote understanding, respect and tolerance between pupils through the well-planned personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum. Pupils are taught the importance of understanding their emotions using a coloured rainbow chart. Whenever they feel stressed pupils are encouraged to use breathing techniques and mindful moments that they learn during their time in the forest.
7. Pupils who take advantage of the flexi-boarding provision are well cared for. They enjoy the home-from-home atmosphere and the extended days that include water sports and local outdoor pursuits.
8. Leaders work together with the diligent maintenance team to ensure the premises and accommodation, including boarding spaces, are maintained effectively. Health and safety checks and maintenance updates take place regularly.

9. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Leaders respond to any concerns quickly. Pupils receive the right support at the right time. This, combined with robust policies and systematic risk assessments, ensures that pupils' welfare is extremely well supported.

## 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:

- make sure that, in the upper school, curriculum plans and how these are taught, consistently meet pupils' different needs and support pupils to successfully build on their knowledge, skills and understanding over time.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. The proprietor and senior staff lead the school effectively. They use their considerable skills and knowledge to good effect so that pupils flourish. The proprietor provides training and guidance to leaders and staff so that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to conduct their roles successfully. This includes boarding staff and staff in early years.
11. Leaders' bespoke curriculum, underpinned by the school's own Baccalaureate, supports their vision to create a school where personal development and academic achievement are valued equally. In all aspects of school life, pupils are encouraged to try new things, be resilient and to discover their own talents. In early years children are encouraged to play and explore in a carefully designed outdoor environment, complete with planks, tractor tyres, climbing equipment, and a forest mud kitchen with its own rain-filled water butt. The supportive and caring staff know children well and actively promote children's physical and emotional health.
12. The proprietor and senior leaders regularly review the school's development plan. Leaders are reflective and continually improve the provision for the pupils. For example, in humanities the topics have been changed to include more global content.
13. This is an inclusive school where pupil needs are well catered for. The precise accessibility plan identifies and appropriately addresses the needs of pupils who have disabilities so that they can fully access the curriculum. The plan meets its duties under the Equality Act 2010. Where a pupil is wholly or partly funded by the local authority, leaders supply the local authority with an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school, as required.
14. There are rigorous systems in place to check that policies are happening in practice. Policies are reviewed and align with current legislation. All staff receive regular training and updates led by more experienced staff and outside specialists.
15. The proprietor meets regularly with senior leaders and takes an active interest in all aspects of safeguarding and recruitment. The proprietor ensures that the team have the appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding to identify and manage risks. The headteacher keeps abreast of any changing legislation to ensure that the school is compliant.
16. Pupils' health, physical and emotional wellbeing are actively promoted through a comprehensive curriculum that includes many sporting opportunities, learning outside in the forest area, and on the local beach. Healthy meals are served each day. Pupils use the 'worry eaters' and the recently introduced 'rainbow trackers' in each classroom to let staff know how they feel.
17. Parents and carers can access a range of valuable information on the school's website. The complaints policy is comprehensive and is followed appropriately to address any complaints when they are made. Parents and carers receive reports three times a year. These reports inform parents and carers about their children's progress and next steps.
18. Leaders make effective links with outside agencies and work in partnership with local experts to support pupils who have more complex needs.
19. Leaders promote a culture that puts pupils' safety at the forefront. Leaders and staff plan off-site educational trips and visits abroad very thoroughly, including pre-visits before pupils are taken off-

site. This lessens any risks to pupils' safety. Risk assessments are detailed and current. Staff use risk assessments as living documents to help them plan exciting and wide-ranging activities whilst mitigating avoidable harms. Staff take pride in ensuring that pupils are challenged whilst being kept safe.

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

**20. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. The school's curriculum is broad and stimulating. Pupils acquire a wide range of knowledge, skills and critical thinking assessed through the St Peter's School Baccalaureate. Extensive use is made of the local environment to enhance the provision for pupils who enjoy a wide range of curricular and co-curricular opportunities.
22. Staff work closely together to plan and teach well-considered cross-curricular learning. For example, Year 5 pupils code an animation based on the literary devices they learn during English lessons that build tension in storytelling. Year 2 visit Dartmoor where they learn about the mysteries and the history of the Moor. Year 1 pupils take part in mathematics lessons on the beach where they use rocks to learn about halves and quarters. The St Peter's School Baccalaureate is taught consistently across subjects. This helps pupils have a clear understanding of expectations and how they can make the most of their learning.
23. Leaders have clear oversight of standardised and internally gathered assessment data. They analyse and identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge. They use this information to plan pupils' next steps. Pupils respond to teachers' marking in their books to improve their work. Most pupils reach or exceed the national, age-related expectations. In the upper school, the content of some lessons and how this content is taught, does not always support pupils to learn and remember what they need to.
24. Leaders identify the additional needs of pupils who have SEND quickly. They pass this information on to teaching staff who develop individual learning plans that set out what each pupil needs to be taught and how. Teachers regularly review the impact of pupils' learning plans with their parents and carers. Pupils who have SEND receive specific support from the 'learning success team' so that these pupils catch-up with their learning and go on to make expected or higher progress. This includes highly effective small group work and individual support that takes place in class, or in the dedicated 'learning success' spaces. Pupils value the extra help that they receive.
25. The wide range of extra and co-curricular opportunities allows pupils to learn new skills such as teamwork, cooperation and resilience. Pupils are enthusiastic about the wide range of clubs available from 'pickle ball' to gardening, where they enjoy growing their own vegetables. The school supports pupils who excel in sport with additional coaching. Some pupils receive awards, at both county and national level.
26. The Year 8 pupils relish the leavers' programme which includes activities locally, on Dartmoor and in France, and the year 6 pupils enjoy a residential trip to London where they explore the city. Previous residential trips include a trip to Madrid for Year 6 to Year 8 pupils.
27. Performances are popular with pupils. Everyone in the upper school has the opportunity to perform on stage in productions and, at the end of the Lower School, there is a production in the local theatre, most recently Peter Pan. Younger pupils sing confidently during the many music concerts for parents.
28. Children in early years are happy and successful learners. The early years staff share the same high expectations that children will enjoy their learning and achieve well. Staff bring a sense of life to children's learning. For example, through teaching in the Wild Woods, Beach School and the varied



equipment children access. This active curriculum supports children's physical, social and emotional progress.

29. Pupils throughout the school develop their emotional, intellectual, social, creative and physical skills through the well-thought through curriculum that prioritises pupils' wellbeing and character development.
30. Teachers ensure that pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education. Pupils successfully gain entry to a range of competitive-entry senior schools, with the majority of pupils gaining scholarships.

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

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

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

32. Leaders promote a culture of kindness and respect with an emphasis on pupils' wellbeing. Pupils feel safe and valued. Pupils are encouraged to develop healthy bodies and minds through the regular opportunities to learn beyond the classroom. Leaders and staff make full use of the local environment to provide an education for all pupils, including children in early years, which combines academic learning, mindfulness and a love of community.
33. Sport is a favourite subject for many pupils. Pupils of all ages develop a wide range of skills and interests. Older pupils have opportunities to play matches most weeks in both single-sex and mixed teams. In all year groups, pupils access swimming, cricket, football and cross-country running. Friday afternoons are dedicated to 'outside the classroom' activities. These include sailing, team-building exercises in the school grounds and horse riding.
34. The curriculum includes a comprehensive personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme. This includes sex and relationships education (RSE), with suitable teaching for pupils' different ages and needs. Regular reflective assemblies enhance this provision. Pupils are encouraged to consider how everyone is unique and should be valued. Pupils have many opportunities to take on responsibilities, such as monitors in early years, school council and eco-club members from Year 1 onwards, and as subject ambassadors or heads of school, house or sport in Year 8. This develops pupils' self-confidence, sense of pride and ownership of their school.
35. Leaders implement the behaviour and anti-bullying policies so that pupils understand the school's systems. Pupils are confident that any incidents are dealt with fairly and appropriately using the 'child-speak behaviour policy'. Pupils demonstrate a high standard of behaviour throughout the school. Positive behaviour is rewarded through kindness catcher certificates, house points, bonus points and other certificates. Pupils are keen to receive these. Bullying is rare and when it happens there is a robust response from leaders and staff.
36. The comprehensive system of pastoral care is especially strong. Senior leaders know every pupil by name. Leaders, staff and pupils are exceptionally caring towards pupils who have SEND. Staff walk the extra mile to provide bespoke support for those pupils who need it. Individual care plans are diligently followed. The school works in partnership with local health specialists to support pupils who may need to work from home owing to more complex medical issues. The school accessibility plan is regularly reviewed and adapted to meet children's emerging needs.
37. Pupils use 'kindness catchers' to celebrate the good deeds of others. Relationships between pupils, as well as with adults, are extremely positive. This creates a calm and happy atmosphere throughout the school.
38. The school premises, including the boarding accommodation, are well maintained. They provide a safe physical environment in which pupils can learn. Leaders ensure that the relevant health and safety laws, including the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 are complied with to ensure pupils' welfare. Suitable records are maintained. The school's first aid accommodation is appropriate and easily accessible. First aid is administered by appropriately qualified staff. There are suitable arrangements in place for the accurate maintenance of admissions and attendance registers, including when pupils join and leave the school at non-standard times.

39. In early years there is a well mapped out programme for developing children's personal, emotional and physical development. Children in both the Nursery and Reception classes are confident and resilient. They demonstrate strong levels of independence for their age.
40. Risk assessments are robust and proportionate. They carefully balance caution and risk mitigation against the benefits of outdoor activities across the site. Pupils are appropriately supervised throughout the school day including at morning drop off and evening collection times.

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

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

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

42. Staff support and model the school's ethos, aims and values which include seeing the school community as an extension of family life. Staff develop relationships with pupils that are built on respect. Pupils are taught to be courteous and considerate. They are proud of their school and its place in the local community and beyond.
43. Pupils are taught the importance of teamwork, collaboration, social interaction, and belonging through the school's wide-ranging co-curricular programme. Pupils develop empathy and compassion. They learn the skills of listening to the opinions of others. Pupils are taught to respect different cultures and viewpoints, including the views of those with protected characteristics. Pupils learn the importance of a balanced argument, which is evident when political issues are brought to pupils' attention.
44. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their work for charitable causes, which contributes positively to the local area and further afield. Pupils' successful charitable work demonstrates their sense of responsibility and respect towards others outside of the school community. Year 3 pupils learn about the story of Grace Darling, the lighthouse keeper's daughter, and recognise this as an example of a selfless act to help others.
45. Pupils learn about the world around them through their PSHE and religion and philosophy (R&P) lessons. They learn about the fundamental British values (FBV), including democracy, the rule of law, and toleration of others' faiths and beliefs. Pupils' PSHE and R&P lessons also develop their capacity to accept responsibility for their behaviour. Pupils are taught about the consequences of their actions. They show respect for the institutions which uphold British society, such as the law and public services.
46. Leaders provide a well-structured careers education with talks and presentations by staff, parents and visitors. Collectively they present a wide range of possible professions and varied routes into higher and further education. Pupils are further exposed to the world of employment and the economy through their work in mathematics. Pupils apply what they have learned about decimals and fractions to various problem-solving activities using money. This equips pupils with important life skills.
47. Pupils who board at the school experience a strong sense of wellbeing and togetherness. This supports pupils well as many of them live a considerable distance from the school.
48. Year 8 pupils have a strong sense of responsibility and leadership. They take pride in the badges they wear which denote the contributions they make to the school community such as in sport, music and the library.
49. In the early years, children are encouraged to develop independence during their learning in the woods and through independent learning opportunities throughout the school day. Children are taught to care for and respect each other. This makes for a happy learning community where children flourish.

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

**50. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Safeguarding

51. Leaders establish systems and arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils. These meet the requirements of the Standards, the early years foundation stage (EYFS), and the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools.
52. Safeguarding pupils is a high priority. The safeguarding policy is comprehensive. Staff are suitably trained so they know and understand their responsibilities. Leaders keep detailed records of any concerns. They take the necessary actions to keep pupils safe. Leaders work with external agencies when appropriate. Leaders carry out and record the required checks on staff before they join the school.
53. New staff receive detailed and effective induction training. This includes part-time teachers and external providers who assist with the co-curricular programme. Leaders ensure that staff access the appropriate level of training before they start to work at the school. All staff receive regular information about any national or local authority safeguarding updates. Staff understand how to raise any concerns about other members of staff. These are correctly recorded and acted upon in a timely manner.
54. Pupils know how to raise a concern. Online safety is taken seriously. Parents and carers are invited to workshops and are given updates via newsletters. There are robust monitoring and screening processes in place to restrict pupils' access to the internet.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding.

55. All the relevant Standards are met.

## School details

<b>School</b>	St Peter's Preparatory School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	878/6020
<b>Address</b>	St Peter's Preparatory School Harefield Lympstone Devon EX8 5AU
<b>Phone number</b>	01395 272148
<b>Email address</b>	head@stpetersprepschool.co.uk
<b>Website</b>	www.stpetersprep.co.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mr Jonathan Middleton
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Jonathan Middleton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Charlotte Johnston
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 13
<b>Number of pupils</b>	311
<b>Number of boarding pupils</b>	60 (on average, flexi boarding over a term)
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	March 2020

## Information about the school

56. St Peter's Preparatory School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school in Harefield, Devon for pupils aged between three and 13 years. It is governed by the owner and supported by an advisory committee. Founded in 1882 as a school for boys, the school moved to its present site in 1949. Female pupils were first admitted in 1974. The nursery was established in 1995 as an extension to the pre-prep. The pre-prep, lower and upper school cater for pupils aged three to seven years, seven to ten years and ten to 13 years respectively.
57. Flexi-boarding is available to pupils from the age of seven years.
58. The school has identified 30 pupils who have SEND. A very small proportion of pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
59. There are a very few pupils who speak English as an additional language.
60. The school states its aims are to encourage children to learn and work independently in a secure and supportive environment so as to give each child the opportunity to develop their full potential, allowing them to progress to the next phase of their life as successful and self-confident individuals.



## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

14 to 16 May 2024

61. A team of five inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

62. 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 proprietor
- 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.

63. 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](http://www.isi.net)**.

**Independent Schools Inspectorate**

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

For more information, please visit [isi.net](http://isi.net)