



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION REPORT

SUNNINGHILL PREPARATORY SCHOOL

MAY 2018



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SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	Sunninghill Preparatory School			
DfE number	835/6029			
Registered charity number	1024774			
Address	Sunninghill Preparatory School South Court South Walks Road Dorchester Dorset DT1 1EB			
Telephone number	01305 262306			
Email address	office@sunninghill.dorset.sch.uk			
Headmaster	Mr John Thorpe			
Chair of governors	Mr Richard Miller			
Age range	0 to 13			
Number of pupils on roll	184			
	Boys	99	Girls	85
	EYFS	46	Juniors	102
	Seniors	36		
Inspection dates	16 to 17 May 2018			

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Sunninghill Preparatory School is a day school for boys and girls from the ages of 9 months to 13 years. The school was founded in 1939 and moved to its current site in 1997. It is owned by a charitable trust and is governed by a board of trustees. Since the last inspection in 2014, a new headmaster has been appointed and there have been significant changes to the site, including the construction of a new all-weather pitch, the relocation of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the music department, and the refurbishment of the science laboratory. It is divided into 4 sections: Fledglings (9 months to 2 years, 9 months), Nursery (2 years, 9 months to 4 years), junior prep (4 to 9 years) and prep (9 to 13 years)

What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school's vision is to be an exceptional and much sought-after family co-educational prep school. Their mission is to provide an outstanding, individualised and broad education in a stimulating learning environment that prepares all its pupils for a happy and fulfilling life.

About the pupils

- 1.3 Pupils come from a range of local professional and business backgrounds, from predominantly white British families. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of pupils is above average. The school has identified thirty-three pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), one of whom has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Thirteen pupils receive additional support for difficulties including dyslexia and dyspraxia. Two pupils require support for English as an additional language (EAL). The school adjusts its curriculum to cater for more able, gifted and talented pupils by enrichment within the classroom, and by providing enhanced opportunities within the school and beyond.

2. REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION

Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. The inspection of schools that have early years settings not requiring registration similarly records whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, the inspection reports on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a COMPLIANCE ONLY inspection and as such reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the full regulations and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014, Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework.](#)

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets almost all of the required standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements. In order to meet all the standards, the school should take immediate action to remedy the deficiency as detailed below.

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 **The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.5 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.6 **The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.7 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to most aspects of current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.8 The school does not ensure that pupils are fully safeguarded because it has not always ensured that references for staff, required by *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, are received before they take up their appointments.
- 2.9 **The standards relating to welfare, health and safety in paragraphs 6 and 9 - 16, the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met, but those in paragraph 7(a) and (b) [safeguarding] are not met.**

Action point 1

- **the school must ensure that pupils are safeguarded by obtaining references for all staff before they commence employment [Part 3, paragraph 7(a) and (b)].**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 **The standard relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17-21] is met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.12 Suitable toilet, changing and showering facilities for pupils and appropriate accommodation for their medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.
- 2.13 **The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**

PART 6 – Provision of information

- 2.14 A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. These include details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for those with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. They also include particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, and its results in public examinations, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.
- 2.15 **The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.**

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.
- 2.17 **The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.**

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 2.18 The proprietor has not ensured that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met. Leadership and management actively promotes the well-being of the pupils.
- 2.19 **The standard relating to leadership and management of the school in sub-paragraph 34(1)(c) is met, but those in sub-paragraphs 34(1)(a) and (b) are not met.**

Action point 2

- **the proprietor must ensure that the leadership and management of the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge so that the other standards are consistently met [Part 8, paragraph 34 (a)].**

Action point 3

- **the proprietor must ensure that the leadership and management of the school fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the other standards are consistently met [Part 8, paragraph 34 (b)].**

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

Overall effectiveness: the quality and standards of the early years provision

- 2.20 The overall effectiveness of the early years provision requires improvement.
- 2.21 As a result of the excellent variety of learning experiences and highly committed staff, children make good and at times excellent progress in relation to their starting points, and are carefully prepared for the next stage of their learning.
- 2.22 Staff meet the needs of individuals effectively and provide opportunities for children to develop and achieve their next steps. They recognise the range of developmental needs of young children and great care is taken to ensure that children are supported and extended where necessary.
- 2.23 A welcoming and homely environment enables children to feel safe and secure. Personal and emotional development is promoted by staff at all times to ensure that children are happy. Opportunities for staff to work with children at times on a one-to-one basis at support and develop children's self-esteem and confidence.
- 2.24 Children's welfare and safeguarding requirements are not fully met. Recruitment procedures do not ensure that suitable references are received for all staff who could come into contact with children, before they start work. However, this was not judged to have a significant impact on children's safety.
- 2.25 The relocation of the Nursery and Reception has allowed the youngest children additional space both indoors and outdoors. Staff have creatively used these spaces to ensure that, within the limitations of the building, the recommendation from the last inspection regarding the free flow of indoor and outdoor activities is met.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

- 2.26 The effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement.
- 2.27 A clear vision to promote a family ethos and provide high-quality provision and care for young children is evident throughout the setting. Staff have high expectations of what babies and young children can achieve and are committed to meeting the needs of the individuals in their care.
- 2.28 Highly effective supervision systems and a robust professional development cycle ensure that staff are well supported in their roles, and training needs are identified and acted upon for the benefit of the children. For example, recently a member of staff attended a course on enriching learning and play in the outdoors, and has implemented ideas from this to improve outdoor learning experiences for children.
- 2.29 Self-evaluation ensures continuous review of practice, and managers set targets through a development plan to ensure improvement. Managers and staff value and welcome the views of parents, who are invited to offer their views on the setting through questionnaires. Parental responses to the inspection questionnaires and discussions with parents were overwhelmingly positive. They commented on the 'affectionate, enthusiastic and imaginative' staff, and how the setting creates a homely, family atmosphere where children feel happy and have fun.
- 2.30 Managers effectively oversee the curriculum to ensure it meets statutory requirements, and work with staff to plan a stimulating and exciting range of activities that recognise the needs and interests of the children. Outdoor learning is a strength of the setting, and the newly developed space provides endless opportunities for learning and exploration. Children were seen searching for 'jewels' in the water and making pies in the 'mud kitchen'. They are supported by knowledgeable staff who skilfully resource and manage the area to meet their needs and promote further learning.

- 2.31 The setting ensures the children are provided the best possible start to their education and are well prepared for each new stage in their learning. Careful thought is afforded to ensuring that children are ready to move into the Nursery, and staff support the children to make this a seamless transition.
- 2.32 Staff actively promote equality and diversity in their everyday practice by ensuring that they provide an inclusive environment and by exposing the children to a variety of resources and displays. Staff model respectful and kind behaviour, and this is reflected in the children's relationships with one another.
- 2.33 British values are promoted with young children through opportunities to make simple choices and to vote for favourite books and songs. Staff emphasise sharing and turn-taking whenever they can, and support young children to develop these skills. However, not all arrangements are in place to ensure safeguarding of children; some staff who could potentially come into contact with children were permitted to begin work before all satisfactory references had been received, as required by *Keeping Children safe in Education*.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

- 2.34 The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding.
- 2.35 Skilled staff have an excellent knowledge of the EYFS framework and of how young children learn, and have consistently high expectations for children in their care. An exciting and stimulating environment, created by enthusiastic and dedicated staff, enables children to be supported and challenged in their learning at every opportunity, and so they make excellent progress.
- 2.36 Staff work closely with parents to ensure that they have an accurate picture of the child, and there is a partnership to enable the child's needs to be met successfully. Assessment information is effectively used to inform planning and generate next steps for children. Staff know their children extremely well and create activities to enhance children's learning through a careful balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities, based around children's needs and interests. Staff recognise when there is still learning potential in activities and will continue to offer these for children who have displayed a significant interest. This allows children to develop confidence and skill in areas of learning.
- 2.37 Children are supported and encouraged by staff to participate in activities such as singing and painting, as well as developing their independence by finding their own shoes and feeding themselves.
- 2.38 Parents are fully informed of their children's progress in relation to their age through regular updates using an online 'learning journey', annual reports, parent consultations and regular informal discussions when they collect their children. Two-year progress checks highlight children's strengths and preferences, and are shared with parents.
- 2.39 Equality of opportunity and recognition of diversity are supported by resources and activities in the setting. Staff ensure that all children have equal access to resources and offer an inclusive environment.
- 2.40 High-quality teaching enables children to develop excellent learning skills. Children are enthusiastic and confident learners as staff make the most of opportunities to support children to be ready for their next stage in learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

- 2.41 The personal development, behaviour and welfare of children requires improvement.
- 2.42 An extremely strong commitment to learning pervades the setting and as a result children are keen to learn and proud of their achievements. Staff create a nurturing and safe environment which allows children to feel safe and confident to explore what is around them. However, the procedures for obtaining staff references before they commence employment have not always been robust and therefore there is a risk that children are not sufficiently safeguarded. This was not judged to represent a significant risk of harm. Children were able to express their opinions when asked if they wanted to join an activity and staff are sensitive to their needs, offering encouragement but recognising when a child wants to play elsewhere.
- 2.43 Resources are easily accessible to children indoors and outside, and encourage them to develop independence while promoting curiosity and imagination. Children were observed mixing paint to create a sun whilst outside, and using brushes, rollers and their hands to paint. Staff use effective questioning to develop children's communication and language skills, and participate with the children to enhance the activity and extend their interests.
- 2.44 Careful thought is afforded to transitions from the setting to the Nursery, and children's needs are fully considered to ensure that they are ready to move on. Settling in sessions and visits offer the opportunities for children to become familiar with the new environment and spend time with the staff.
- 2.45 Children form excellent bonds with their key person and other staff in the setting. Staff provide reassurance and comfort to children so that they trust them and feel secure. This creates a warm and friendly atmosphere where children interact happily and respond positively to all adults. Good manners and behaviour are promoted at every opportunity and children display excellent listening and focus when working with adults.
- 2.46 Children are developing an understanding of how to keep themselves safe, for example when staff used photographs to talk about road safety at snack time and related it to a recent trip to the park. Regular time spent outdoors allows children opportunities to develop physical skills and learn how to move safely around on wheeled toys.
- 2.47 Children enjoy nutritious snacks and meals, helping them to develop an understanding about healthy food. Staff discuss food choices with the children and encourage and praise children when they try new things. They ensure that children's hands are clean before snacks and meal times by using flannels and wipes.

Outcomes for children

- 2.48 Outcomes for children are outstanding.
- 2.49 All children, including those with SEND or EAL, make good or better progress in relation to their starting point. They reach and some exceed the level of development that is typical for their age.
- 2.50 Children display high levels of engagement and were seen participating enthusiastically in action songs and demonstrating great focus as they mixed, poured and stirred porridge oats. Staff model language clearly for the children to promote their communication skills. Children respond positively to staff who encourage them to repeat their friend's names at snack time and answer their name as staff sing the register in the morning.
- 2.51 Children explore the outdoor area and develop their physical skill as they freely move around the space and select resources that they want to play with. Opportunities for children to engage in a variety of sensory play promote language and discussion whilst offering new experiences for exploration. This was evident when children played in the water washing their dolls, modelled with play dough and created their own paintings.
- 2.52 Children demonstrate high levels of focus and concentration for their age and listen carefully when staff speak to them. They use language and gestures effectively to express themselves and staff are quick to respond to children and promote conversations.

Compliance with statutory requirements

2.53 In order to meet the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 fully, those responsible for the registered provision must take the following action.

Action point for EYFS

- **the school must ensure that all staff who come into contact with children have undergone suitable vetting processes, including obtaining satisfactory references in advance of them taking up their post [EYFS 3.7, 3.9 and 3.12].**

Recommendation for further improvement

The school is advised to make the following improvement to its provision for children in the early years.

- Promote greater independence in personal hygiene by encouraging children to wash their own hands before mealtimes.

3. INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 3.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors, and attended form meetings. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Elizabeth Harris	Reporting inspector
Mr Nicholas Roddis	Compliance team Inspector (Deputy head, IAPS school)
Miss Victoria Plenderleith	Co-ordinating inspector for early years