



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Regulatory Compliance Inspection Report**

**Hilden Oaks Preparatory School and Nursery**

**September 2022**

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## School's Details

<b>School</b>	Hilden Oaks Preparatory School and Nursery			
<b>DfE number</b>	886/6032			
<b>Early Years registration number</b>	EY360192			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	307935			
<b>Address</b>	Hilden Oaks Preparatory School and Nursery 38 Dry Hill Park Road Tonbridge Kent TN10 3BU			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01732 353941			
<b>Email address</b>	secretary@hildenoaks.co.uk			
<b>Headmistress</b>	Mrs Katy Joiner			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Derick Walker			
<b>Age range</b>	3 months to 11 years			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	164			
	<b>Kindie</b>	11	<b>Kindergarten</b>	15
	<b>Pre-school</b>	18	<b>Reception</b>	16
	<b>Pre-prep</b>	32	<b>Prep</b>	72
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14 to 15 September 2022			

## **1. Background Information**

### **About the school**

- 1.1 Hilden Oaks Preparatory School and Nursery was established in 1919 as a co-educational day school. It moved to its present location in 1965 and since 2010 has catered for pupils from three months. A board of trustees are responsible for the school's governance. The school is organised into three main sections: the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); pre-prep, for pupils in Years 1 and 2; and prep, for pupils in Years 3 to 6.

### **What the school seeks to do**

- 1.2 The school aims to provide a stimulating, challenging and dynamic learning environment in a safe, family atmosphere which demands the highest standards from pupils and staff alike. The school wants all pupils to say that it is the best school they ever attended, all staff members that it is the best place they have ever worked and all parents that it is the best choice they have ever made for their child.

### **About the pupils**

- 1.3 Pupils live within twenty miles of the school and come from a range of professional backgrounds. The school's own assessment indicates that the ability of most of the pupils is above average compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 20 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), 17 of whom receive additional specialist help. No pupil has an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 9 pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers. The most able in the school's population are identified by the school's own assessments, and the school modifies the curriculum accordingly.

## 2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

### Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report 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. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are 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 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 standards 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 does not meet 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, and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.**

### **PART 1 – Quality of education provided**

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 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 Pupils receive relationships education. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy, which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

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

### **PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 The school has an appropriate safeguarding policy and provides suitable related training for staff. Appropriate arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils in areas such as making referrals to local agencies and listening to children. In these areas, actions taken pay due regard to current statutory guidance.
- 2.10 However, not all required recruitment checks have been carried out before appointment, including checks on prohibition from teaching and management for relevant staff.
- 2.11 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety in paragraphs 6, 9–16, the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 (accessibility plan), and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met, but that those in paragraph 7 [safeguarding] are not met.**

### **Action point 1**

<p><b>The school must ensure that it carries out the required recruitment checks before staff commence work [paragraph 7(a) and (b); EYFS 3.9, 3.10 and 3.11].</b></p>
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## **PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors**

- 2.12 The school does not make all the appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff. Identity checks, enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and overseas criminal background checks are not always completed before appointment.
- 2.13 The school does not use supply staff.
- 2.14 The school makes all the appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of trustees.
- 2.15 A single central register of appointments is not kept as required, as dates of checks are not always recorded.
- 2.16 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school in paragraphs 18 to 21 are not met.**

### **Action point 2**

**The school must ensure that all the required recruitment checks are completed before a person commences work at the school [paragraph 18(2)(e) and 18(3); EYFS 3.9, 3.10 and 3.11].**

### **Action point 3**

**The school must ensure that it maintains a single central register that includes all the required information relating to recruitment checks [paragraph 21(3)(a)(i),(v) and (viii), 21(3)(b); EYFS 3.12].**

## **PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 2.17 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' 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.
- 2.18 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**

## **PART 6 – Provision of information**

- 2.19 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes 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 any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, 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.
- 2.20 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.**

## **PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled**

- 2.21 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.

**2.22 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.**

## **PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

2.23 The proprietor does not ensure that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

2.24 Arrangements for recruitment checks and their recording on the single central register are not effective and are not monitored closely enough by school leaders and trustees.

**2.25 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school in paragraph 34 is not met.**

### **Action point 4**

**The school must ensure that the leadership and trustees demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c)].**



### **3. The quality and standards of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

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

- 3.1 The overall effectiveness of the early years provision is inadequate.
- 3.2 Since the previous inspection, children have been given many opportunities to further develop their understanding about different cultures and people with disabilities. Comprehensive curriculum planning ensures that many different cultures are studied throughout the year. Children's learning is not confined to big celebrations such as Diwali, Christmas and Chinese New Year but is developed through daily activities and resources available such as birthday celebrations, traditional stories, dolls and imaginative play. Parents are invited into the setting to read stories in their home language.
- 3.3 The setting has successfully introduced a digital Early Years management system which includes on-line registration so attendance can be tracked, medical and dietary requirements recorded, reporting of accidents and incidents and half termly assessments with details of next steps and how parents can support them.
- 3.4 A new staff performance management system has been introduced including an appropriate focus on well-being and practitioners are able access on-line training at home. The continual development of practitioner knowledge has had a positive impact on practice and improved the outcomes for children. Pre-school children have a new dedicated outdoor area to play and explore with different levels and resources, enabling their needs and interests to be met effectively. The children's enjoyment of books and stories has been enhanced by the new school library.
- 3.5 Children's attainment and progress relative to their starting points are outstanding. The well-planned curriculum ensures all children including those with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) gain the skills and knowledge they need, often exceeding what is age appropriate. Children are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Their understanding and development are built upon in a systematic and robust way as they move through the setting. Leaders are effective in evaluating practice and securing continuous development that improves outcomes for children.
- 3.6 The nursery provides a high standard of care and staff demonstrate an excellent knowledge of how young children learn. Children display high levels of emotional security and form strong and positive attachments with their key person. Their personal and emotional development is supported extremely well; they are secure and happy at nursery and actively engage with their environment.
- 3.7 There is a shared understanding of and responsibility for protecting children. However, the requirements for children's safeguarding and welfare have not been fully met as the school does not have robust systems in place to ensure that all staff working within the school have had the required pre-employment checks.

#### **Quality of education**

- 3.8 The quality of education is outstanding.
- 3.9 The curriculum is perfectly designed to meet the needs of the children at an age-appropriate level whilst offering challenge and support as necessary. Rigorous planning systems and effective monitoring ensure that all the areas of the curriculum are covered, with the prime areas of development being the focus for the younger children, to advanced levels of literacy and numeracy being taught in pre-school.
- 3.10 Carefully planned activities ensure children gain the skills and knowledge they need, with sufficient challenge to allow children to often exceed what is expected for their age. For example, pre-school children show superb skills of rhyming when joining in with a story. They also confidently order numbers and show the correct number of fingers when asked. With the younger children,

practitioners skilfully introduce the concepts of capacity as the children fill and empty containers with dried pasta. There is clear progression in the tasks set and the expectations of the children.

- 3.11 The activities planned and resources available are inviting and enthuse the children. There is flexibility to follow the children's interests and current events. For example, the focus on family after the death of The Queen.
- 3.12 Outstanding individual attention is given by the practitioners to the children, with time for one-to-one conversations, time given to allow children to think and reflect, and quality time to share an activity or experience together.
- 3.13 Practitioners are excellent at asking children questions, allowing them to communicate at their level and giving them opportunities to increase their vocabulary by modelling full sentences or explaining the meanings of unfamiliar words. The youngest children cheerfully babble and make noises whilst engaged in activities. Older children, including those with English as an additional language, understand each other so they can share resources and happily play alongside one another. Children confidently hold age-appropriate conversations with adults in the room.
- 3.14 Assessment is used highly effectively to track children's progress, identify their next steps of development, and to inform future planning. Children are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education. Their knowledge and skills are built upon in a systematic and robust way as they move through the nursery.

### **Behaviour and attitudes**

- 3.15 Behaviour and attitudes are outstanding.
- 3.16 All children show outstanding engagement in their learning. They demonstrate positive attitudes through high levels of curiosity, concentration and enjoyment. Children are highly enthusiastic learners and are extremely keen to explore their surroundings inside and in the outdoor areas. Children freely access their own resources and spend a long time playing with their chosen activity, for example lining up cars on the carpet.
- 3.17 Children show excellent levels of concentration and perseverance as they independently attempt to change their wet socks after splashing in puddles; they exhibit a great sense of pride in their achievements.
- 3.18 Children show confidence to have their own ideas. When asked to find something to make a drum, they return with a teapot to bang and crayons to tap together. Children are challenged and encouraged to make links and extend their thinking. For example, once they have made a sound on the drum, they are challenged to draw a sound.
- 3.19 From the youngest children, they begin to show excellent habits for their future learning. They can listen carefully, follow instructions and show respect for one another by waiting and taking turns. Children demonstrate exceptional behaviour.
- 3.20 All children display resilience when something goes wrong; they keep trying with high levels of perseverance and determination for their age. The younger children exhibit outstanding independence when they say goodbye to their parents and walk into nursery carrying their coats and bags. Partnerships with parents are excellent and attendance is monitored closely using the digital management system.

### **Personal development**

- 3.21 The personal development of children is inadequate.
- 3.22 Highly effective care practices ensure children feel safe and secure and can express themselves and make their own decisions. The excellent key person system helps children form strong, secure

attachments, and promotes their well-being and independence. Children are quick to seek support, reassurance, or comfort whenever they need it.

- 3.23 Practitioners are excellent at developing children's confidence and provide outstanding support to encourage children to take appropriate risks and try new things. They use praise and encouragement and ask the children if they feel safe so they can take responsibility for their own actions. Practitioners also effectively model failure and how this is an important part of learning, so children feel comfortable to take risks and make mistakes.
- 3.24 Practitioners act as excellent role models. They are kind and courteous and show high levels of respect towards the children, always asking them what they think, want to do, and if they are happy with what has been asked. Children's responses are respected. If children do not want to complete an activity, they are allowed to choose another task.
- 3.25 A good range of healthy foods is available, and all children are actively encouraged to try new options. Children sit exceptionally well during snack and mealtimes, clearly enjoying the food and the social experience. They demonstrate excellent table manners for their age.
- 3.26 Hygiene practices are highly effective at meeting the personal needs of children of all ages. Practitioners are calm and caring as they encourage children to become increasingly independent in managing their personal needs.
- 3.27 Children are fully prepared for life in modern Britain. The school values, which complement fundamental British values, are successfully woven into the curriculum and learning experiences. Practitioners support the children to develop their understanding and appreciation of diversity and the differing needs within a community.
- 3.28 The school does not have effective systems in place to ensure that all staff are suitably checked before working with children. Due to the inconsistency of procedures regarding safer recruitment, the school does not meet the statutory requirements for safeguarding.

### **Leadership and management**

- 3.29 Leadership and management are inadequate.
- 3.30 Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for providing high-quality, inclusive care and education to all. This is articulated through the school's aims and values. Leaders effectively monitor the impact of the curriculum to ensure that all children, particularly those with SEND, have full access to their entitlement.
- 3.31 Leaders have effective systems in place for the supervision and support of staff. A newly introduced performance management system is highly successful in encouraging practitioners to reflect on their practice and identify areas to develop through professional development opportunities. Leaders engage with staff and are aware of the main pressures on them. They are realistic and constructive in the way they manage staff including their workload and the new digital management system has had a positive impact in this regard.
- 3.32 Parents are highly positive about the nursery. Strengths they highlight are the relationships that the children have with practitioners and the level of care and support they are given. Parents are extremely happy with the information they receive regarding their child's daily routines as well as their development and next steps via the digital management system.
- 3.33 The leadership and management at the school do not fulfil their statutory duties in relation to safer recruitment as they do not ensure that everyone working in the school is consistently checked to satisfy the requirements of their roles. Those with oversight do not fully understand their role in relation to safer recruitment and do not fulfil their responsibilities effectively.

### **Compliance with statutory requirements**

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

#### **Action points for EYFS**

**The school must ensure that it carries out all the required recruitment checks before staff commence work [EYFS 3.9, 3.10 and 3.11]**

**The school must ensure that all the required recruitment checks are completed and recorded on the single central register [EYFS 3.12]**

## 4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended hymn practice and registration. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mrs Sue La Farge	Reporting inspector
Mrs Ann-Marie Elding	Co-ordinating inspector for early years (Head of the preparatory school, SofH school)
Mr Bob Ukiah	Compliance team inspector (Chief operating officer, HMC school)